KASHMIR HINDU SANSKARS

(Rituals, Rites and Customs)

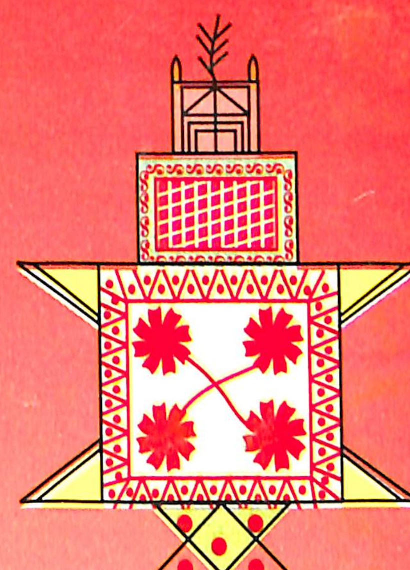
A STUDY



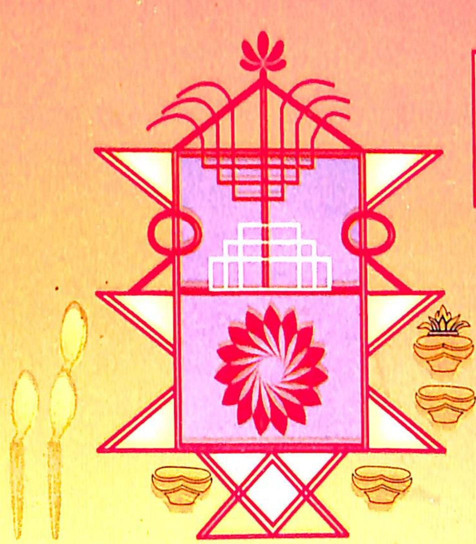










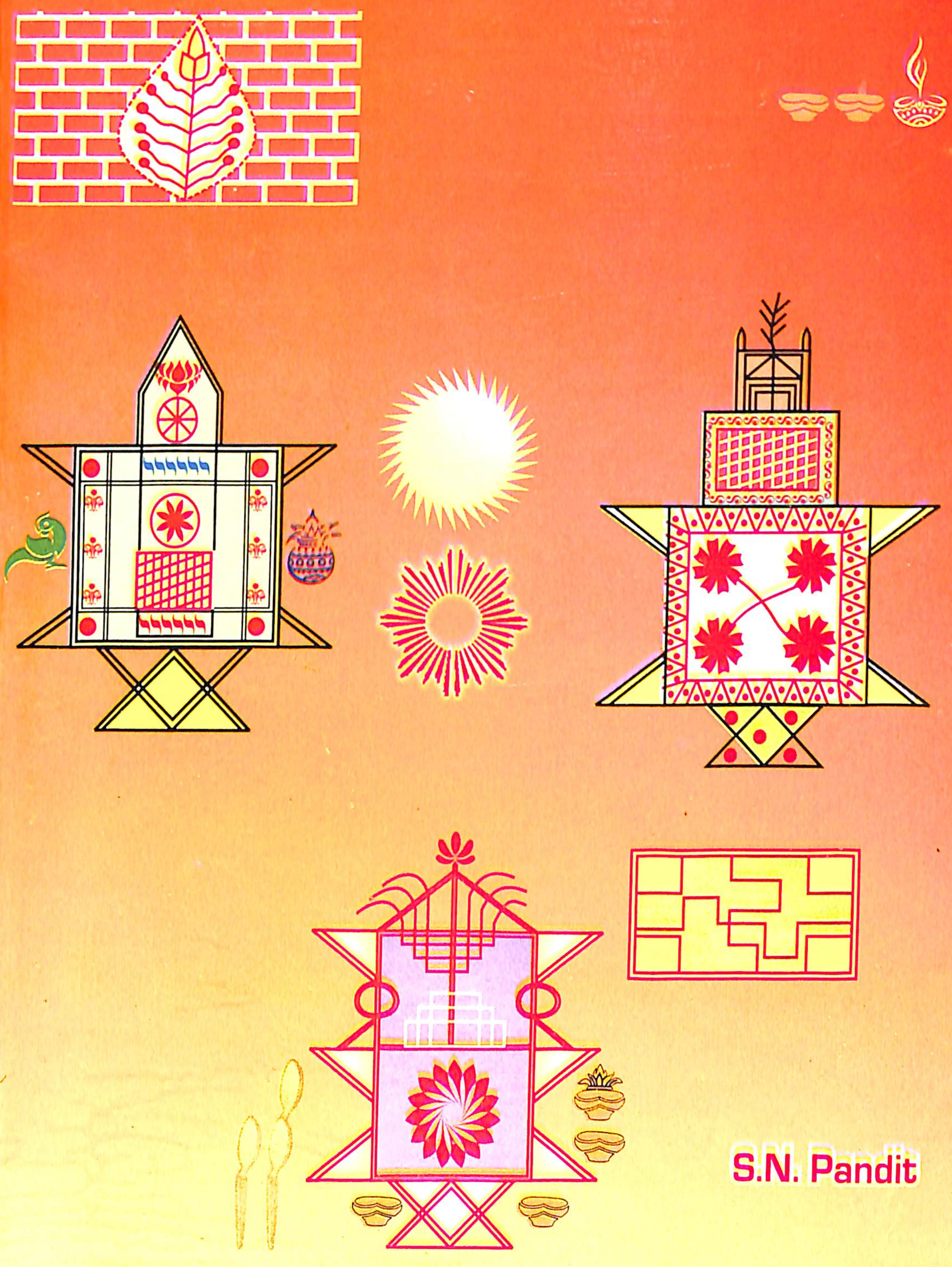


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PREFACE

An attempt has been made in the '*Kashmir Hindu Sanskars' (Rituals, Rites and Customs)* – A Study, to refer and discuss almost all the *Sanskars*, rituals, customs and superstitious beliefs of the Hindus of the valley of Kashmir. Every care has been taken to include all the nomenclatures in the spoken Kashmiri language and the descriptions of all these beliefs including those contained in literary works on the subject published earlier from time to time.

This book will be useful as a reference manual for those anthropologists who are engaged in the deep study of the origin, physical and cultural developments, social customs and beliefs of mankind in general and the people of the valley of Kashmir in particular.

While keeping in mind the difficulties that a non speaker of the language may face in reading the Kashmiri language portions which have been incorporated in the text wherever necessary or the nomenclatures of some of the rituals and customs or culture-depending terms, the following phonemes have been incorporated in the book in addition to the ones that already exist while transliterating from other Modern Indian/Oriental language into the approved Roman Script: -

S.No: Particulars	High		Mid		Low	
	Short	Long	Short	long	Short	long
1. Central Vowels	I	I:	a	--	--	a:
.	A	A	--	--	--	--
2. Front Vowels	i	i:	--	--	--	--
3. Mid Front "	e	e:	e’	e‘	--	--
4 .Back Front "	u	u:	--	---	--	--
5. Mid Back "	o	o:	--	--	>	<
6. Un-aspirated voiceless palatal affricate					ts	tsh
7. Voiced dental fricative					z	--
8. Un-aspirated voiceless retroflex stop					T	Th
9. Voiced dental nasal					n	--

The phonemes have been approved and adopted by the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Government of India and adopted by it in its publications while transliterating the Kashmiri language.

I must express my gratitude to Professor B. L. Fotedar who, in spite of his busy schedule, spared time to examine and re-arrange the text and make the work presentable. My thanks are due to Professor, Dr. B. L. Kaul, Ex. Head of the Department of Hindi, University of Kashmir, Srinagar who expressed him self by writing a Foreword after a through study of the research project. My thanks are also due to Dr. Shafi Shouq, Head of the Department of Kashmiri, University of Kashmir and Dr. R.L.Bhat, a well known columnist, critic and social worker, who gave me the moral support in completing the project. I express my gratitude to Sh. P.K. Shukla, Deputy Director Research, Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, for his kind sympathy, steady encouragement and valuable suggestions during the course of completing the project. I give credit to the proprietors of M/S Gemini Computers, Janipur, Jammu, namely Mr. and Mrs. Dalip Pandita, my son and daughter-in-law who gave me their full assistance and co-operation during the process of preparing a computerized version of this work. Lastly, my thanks are due to Mr. Ashwani Dass for his technical help while taking up this job in hand.

This book is a humble presentation on my behalf to the scholars and students having love for the Kashmiri people, their language and their deep-rooted customs, rituals and social behaviors. Suggestions, if any, for its further improvement shall be a boon to the scholars of this language.

Jaishta Ashtami,
4 – 6- 2006

S.N. Pandit

FOREWORD

Sanskar is an act of purification or giving a shine to a surface after polishing or rubbing it. The essence of the word is purification of the mind, reformation, self-realization and knowledge of the Supreme Self. In general sense we can say that purification is an act that washes away ones sins and such ritualistic acts are called *Sanskars*. Actually the *Sanskars* are ritualistic obligations laid for the twice born which, according to *Manu* are twelve in number but the Kashmiri *Pandits* observe sixteen or twenty-four such ritualistic obligations.

The purposeful and thought provoking book, "*Kashmir Hindu Sanskars,* (Rituals, Rites and Customs) – A Study", by Sh. S.N. Pandit, besides presenting a clear picture of our wonderful civilizational and social life, also connects us with our glorious past. It is an essential tradition for us to have a suitable knowledge of our socio-religious customs and traditions as a Kashmiri *Pandit*. This understanding can protect and safe guard our racial identity.

The first attempt in this direction was made by Mr. Pandit in the year 1982 when the Post-graduate Department of Kashmiri, University of Kashmir published his research paper in a book form entitled, "*KA:shire'n Battan HIndi' RasIm TI Rewaj*' in the Kashmiri Language. It was his first attempt in this direction. It is due to his continuous study and meaningful pondering for the last twenty-four years that the present composition of the book that extends over 461 pages, has come into existence.

Refinement is very essential to a progressive society. The basic principle of a Kashmiri *Pandit* is, "Live and let live'. We can safely say that our civilization is a specially developed and a distinct branch of the great and famous Aryan civilization. A segregated clan of *Sarswat Brahmins* from the Aryan sect has been living in this mountainous region for the last several thousand years where the *Nagas*, the *Yakshas*, the *Pishachs* and also the *Arysns* lived collectively. Being away from the main stream of the *Bharta Varsha* and living in a particularly different geographical

region in the lap of a distinct natural habitat, new and different cultural elements and values found their way into the cultural life of the Kashmiri *Pandits*. That is why the Aryan civilization that developed in the Kashmir region is known as the 'Kashmiri *Pandit* Civilization.' I want to point out one more thing for my readers that culture, rituals, rites and orthodoxy are not synonymous. *Sanskars* denote purification; rites and rituals symbolize order, and continuity. Tradition is a continuous and never ending chain of customs and orthodoxy is a sign of unchanging and rigid traditions.

The writer has discussed the rites, rituals and customs of the Kashmiri *Pandits* in detail and with reason. The author has also tried to present the facts as contained in his treatise in a systematic manner and in their historical context and has divided the table of its contents into seventeen chapters. Keeping in view the religious background and the social considerations the author has discussed in appropriate details the pre-birth and post-birth *Sanskars*, the *Sanskars* pertaining to the adolescence in a scholarly manner. The '*Yagnyopavita*' *Sanskar*, its social, religious and philosophical importance, the meaning and significance of the '*Gayatri Mantra*', the three obligations of a man, marriage as a *Sanskar*, the rituals, rites customs and festive celebrations held on the eve of our marriages, our pre and post-marriage rituals, the three stages of an individual, the *Grahasth Ashram*, the *Vanprasth* and the *Sannyas* and above all the last rites which I consider as the most lucid and essential of all the Sanskars, have been discussed appropriately. Keeping in view all the facts the writer has discussed diligently all the auspicious days in a particular year and the reasons behind such considerations. The religious rites performed on such days, their social utility, the ritualistic performances connected with such beliefs have also been discussed in detail by the author. *Navreh, ZangI Tray, BhAdra KA:li Jayanti:, ShravanI Punim, Janam AshTami, Maha: Navam, GadI BatI, GorI Tray, He'rath, Sonth* and *Navreh Ma:vas*, all these festivals have a special significance in our social and cultural life and we celebrate all these days with religious fervor and with full

faith and devotion. The author has laid down his views about their relevance in a lucid manner.

Our community faced the realities of life boldly and with self- confidence fighting back the hardships of migration that continue till today. There are very few examples in the world history where the people have tried to keep themselves united and combined as a single group after having been ousted from their homes and hearths and compelled to lead the life of refugees and that too in their own country and State. But still the Kashmiri *Pandit* has kept alive his tradition of celebrating his festivals, rites and rituals. He has worshipped the 'V*aTakh Nath Bhairva*' in his single-room tent and thus kept alive the tradition of celebrating his *Shiv Ratri*. Such devotion and self-confidence can rarely be seen among the refugee societies in the annals of the world history.

The author has discussed in the background of beliefs held by various sections of the society the auspicious and ominous horal moments, planets and position of stars and their consequent effects, superstitions concerning auspicious and inauspicious omens and the duties of a Kashmiri Pandit couple in the family and the rituals which they perform in their day to day life.

No doubt there are a number of rituals and festivals which have been given up either due to our slavery for centuries under foreign rule, or due to the tyrannical massacres at the hands of the fanatics from time to time and then as a result of the recent exodus from our motherland. Actually the writer has tried to assemble and unite in a systematic manner the scattered pearls of our past civilization for our present readers.

The characteristic aspects of the life of a Kashmiri *Pandit*, the depth of his thoughts and impulses in preservation of his *Sanskars* and how much he has remained associated with the cultural heritage of his forefathers - the present study makes a purposeful reference to all these important facts.

It is after a long time that a book based on Hindu ethos, which, besides being based on sound reasoning, is also thought provoking and educative. Earlier books published on the subject have lacked research and scholarship.

At the time of working on the *Sanskars,* one needs to take three facts into consideration. One is the religious importance of the *Sanskar* and its order of preference, the second is its civilizational aspect its utility, and its historical development in a society and lastly the acceptance accorded to the *Sanskar* by the general public. Now a days the scientific aspect of the *Sanskars* is being discussed widely. For instance we can take the *Yagnyopavita Sanakar* after which the boy becomes a *Pandit*, a well-read person from the religious point of view. He becomes a *'Karma Kandi'*, a twice-born *Brahmin* and thus he attains a second birth. From the civilizational point of view he gets attached with his group or the family traditions etc., and gets the social sanctions to fulfill his social obligations independently. The importance of celebrating '*Divgo>n*' at the time of the *Yagnyopavita* or the marriage in its religious or social context has also been discussed in detail. While the impurity on account of the birth of a male child in a Kashmiri Hindu family ends on the date of holding his *Jatkarn Sasnskar*, this impurity ends on the date of the *Divgo>n* in case of a girl. I think that the function of *Divgo>n* prior to the *Yagnyopavita* or the marriage is a kind of prayers offered to our gods and goddesses in our effort to invoke their blessings.

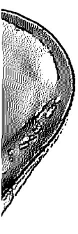
The *Amavasya* of preparing hotchpotch in honour of the *Yaksha,* commonly known as "*Khe'tsi Mavas'* held on the dark fifteenth day of the month of *Pausha*, is a festival of brother-hood and peaceful co-existence This is a festival of affection, brother-hood and mutual co-existence among the *Nagas,* the *Pishas*, the *Yakshas* and the Aryans, who called themselves as the most advanced people. This festival was held to bind all of them firmly in one social string.

The auspicious occasions relating to our farming (from Spring up to Autumn) have found an ample space in the book. It is followed by a bibliography and an index spread over 27 pages. The author has tried to make the work of the readers easier in locating the place-names in the book, which is worth praise because such details involve much labour, and understanding.

I am confident that the book, '*Kashmir Hindu Sanskars* (Rituals, Rites and Customs) – A Study' will prove a useful reference book in understanding the history, religion, civilization and various other social aspects of the Kashmiri *Pandit* Society. Our community was actually in a great need of such a scholarly book since long and this need was felt by Mr. Pandit who has fulfilled this need by presenting a suitable book after working on it laboriously and continuously for more than twenty-four years. Future scholars and critics of anthropological studies will adjudge and admire how far the author has succeeded in achieving this goal successfully.

Dated: Jammu (J. & K.)
Navreh
March 30, 2006.

Dr. B.L. Koul,
M.A., Ph. D., D. Lit
Ex. Professor and Head of the
Post-graduate Deptt. Of Hindi
University of Kashmir, Srinagar



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We, the Pandits of Kashmir, are an old people. Our history goes back to more than five thousand years. When the valley was desiccated in historical times, human groups began their settlement on the land. In the process, because of historical and geographical imperatives, they had to intermingle. Thus was born the indigenous race of the forebears of the present Kashmirian people. This is what we can draw from the *Nilmata Purana.*

At the end of the day, and after great churning, all racial groups involved in the process of forging one uniform pattern, converged into the Aryan mainstream of *Vedic* orientation. This leads to the formation of somewhat uniform social and cultural ethos of the emergent race of ancient Kashmiris.

During the long period of our chequered history, the indigenous Kashmiris have weathered many cataclysms and braved many catastrophes. At times these were shocking and at occasions never breaking. Millennium after millennium they met with intense social turmoil and civilizational onslaughts. Yet the resolute people had to look for a new spirit released by these cataclysms.

But the social revolution of early 14th century had far reaching consequences for the entire Pandit community. It virtually demolished the millennia old social and cultural structure whose roots served as the fountainhead for the survival of the indigenous people. Thus the Pandits lost their history seven hundred years ago and are yet to rebuild it even by bits and slices.

The baffling question still remaining without a precise answer is how did this small and rather negligible remnant of the indigenous people hold on so tenaciously, and at great pains, to its antiquated social and cultural heritage and its symbols despite the hostile environs threatening its survival intermittently. Like all groups of indigenous people elsewhere, subjected to external physical and civilizational incursions, the Kashmiri Pandit also had to devise through intuition means and methods of their survival. Its commendable aspect is that in the great struggle for physical survival, the Pandits laboriously carried from generation

to generation the rather cumbersome baggage of the manifestations of their identification symbols.

Students of the history of indigenous people know in the event of pervading social revolution some of their local elements try to identify themselves with external civilizational entrepreneurs either out of self-aggrandizement, temptation or fear. This naturally makes the community more vulnerable to the threats of extinction. Pandits were no exception.

As has been hinted at the beginning, the Vedic civilization essentially remained the prime ingredient of ancient Kashmirian culture. From the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Samhitas* and other *Sutras*, the indigenous Pandits drew their philosophy, mythology and civilizational trapping. There is a plethora of evidence to show that the indigenous Kashmirian Pandit willingly identified himself with the religious and mythological mainstream of Bharata, the land of great epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana.* He adopted the deities with supernatural powers as his mythological mainstay. He created local replicas of the holy *tirthas*, The *Gangabal, Prayaga* and *Koti-tirtha,* besides those exclusive to his Kashmir *mandala.* He gave new contours and profile to gods and goddesses, *asuras* and *bhairavas.* This was his ingenuity. His rites, rituals and customs remain closely appended to the phenomenon.

To the ordinary Kashmiri Pandits, rites, rituals and customs pervading the entire spectrum of their social and cultural life, remained prime symbols of their identity. These were in full consonance with the nature, which never tolerated alienation. Thus the Vedic tradition remained deeply embedded in the ethos that snowballed with the passage of time. True, in the course of their long history of deep attachment to identification symbols, the Kashmiri Pandit might have unintentionally forgotten part of historical and mythological legitimacy of these manifestations. But their uninterrupted observance on a mass scale gave them valuable support.

There is no second word about the great antiquity of Pandit rites, rituals and customs. They are amusingly intricate and to some extent rather unwieldy. Some of the Pandits have moved away from their mythological moorings and may not be over-enthusiastic of their basics. History does not accept immobility.

But what is interesting is that despite the onslaught of speed and suspense of modern life, most of the Pandits, generally responsive to modernity, have tried to stick to these marks of identification and heritage. It is inspiring to note that the Pandits have found a delicate and yet colourful balancing exercise of responding scientific and technological advancement of modern times and to the antiquated traditions without allowing contradiction to cause frustration or aberration. It is a matter of blending myth and reality, material with spiritual, earthly with cosmic and natural with supernatural.

S. N. Pandit's work is a labour of love. He has compiled the Almanac of the Pandit Sanskars at a time when the entire community has entered the fifteenth year of its exile. In drastically changed circumstances forcing assimilation of the community into the vast Hindu milieu of India, only to get submerged and lost, the survival of Pandit identity seems almost uncertain. However, the record of how the Pandits were identifiable, produced by Soom Nath Pandit is a commendable exercise. I think that this work will remain a lasting anthropological evidence of a vanishing indigenous group of people on the sub-continent.

Jammu,
25-2-2006,

Prof. Dr. K. N. Pandita
Ex. Director,
Central Asian Studies,
University of Kashmir.
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INTRODUCTION TO KASHMIR HINDU SANSKARS

It is generally accepted that Hinduism is not a religion but a 'Dharma' – a way of life, a code of human conduct and a belief in the principle, 'live and let live'. Some thinkers are of the view that this loose type of system is the main reason of its survival through the ages while others consider it to be the main cause of its restricted growth. It may be true that rigidity in beliefs is good for the survival of a religion, but that it leads to its stagnation, can hardly be denied. This is what our great *Rishis* have propagated among their disciples while imparting the codes of conduct and Dharma to them. "As you sow so shall you reap', is not a saying in our scriptures but is the essence of our religious performances and practices. Alas! we have misused our religious tolerance and religious freedom.

Actually the whole Indian sub-continent is a single block of a community called, the Hindus. Much earlier than the advent of caste system in the sub-continent, the *Naga* children of *Kashapa* from *Kadru*, due to the persecution of *Garuda*, the son of *Kashapa* from his second wife, '*Vanita*', were directed to live in the safe valley of Kashmir under the protection of *Nila*. The decedents of *Kashapa* were all considered to be the *Swaraswat* Brahmins. Besides, some scattered families of the *Pishachas* were also residing in the valley of Kashmir prior to the arrival of the *Nagas*. The peculiar geographical boundaries, the climate of the region and the local social relationship had, made the Kashmiri society so compact that the great storm of caste system, after swaying the whole sub-continent, lost its impact on reaching the valley of Kashmir. Thus the people of the valley retained in tact their Brahamnical order which they had imbibed from their fore-fathers. Therefore, all the scholars of great fame in various fields of learning which the valley has given to the world, were all Kashmiri Brahmins

The *Puranas* and the *Smritis* contain that at the onset of the first *Manvantra, Brahma*, the creator of this universe, directed nine *Rishis* to inhabit this newly created part of the land that had emerged after draining the waters of the *Sati*

Sara. They are, *Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Vishvamitra, Bharadwaja, Gautama, and Jamadagni. Maharshi Mirichi*, considered the greatest among these, is said have been the main cause of establishing human society on this earth and is thus called the '*Prajapati*'. The last of these *Rishis*, i.e., *Jamadagni* is considered to be the proponent of the Vedic rituals. But the distinct character of Kashmiri rituals and *Sanskars* strictly follow the doctrines put forth by *Laugakshi*. With the passage of time these rituals and customs came to serve as pillars of the Dharma.

Besides the scholars of Dharam Shastra, the number of Kashmiri luminaries in other fields of learning, was not small. The most famous among them are *Kalhan Pandit, Jon Raj, Shrivara, Bhamah, Vamana, Mamatta, Raudratta, Anand Vardhana, Abhinava Gupta, Udhatta, Jayrath, Rajanaka, Ananda Rattan Kantha, Somananda, Jaggdhar Bhatta, Keshav Bhatta, Anant Ram Shastri*, and many others and all of them belonged to the same Brahmin priestly class whose contribution to the society and to the literature of the world in general and of India in particular, cannot be under-estimated. Then why this luminary class of the Kashmir society got neglected and finally almost vanished, un-sung and un-heard? One reason is that the Kashmir society developed and lived in an aloof and peculiar geographical, and climatic surroundings and continued to maintain its rites, rituals and ceremonies without any change that amounted to stagnation. But there were great social, economic and religious upheavals in the whole Indian sub-continent that resulted in the creation of various castes and sub-castes among Hindus. The Hindu society accepted the changes in the social order but retained its old religious fervour firmly even in the castes. Such was not the case with the Kashmiri society. There were sudden and total changes but no caste formation. Since all were Brahmins, they performed all their religious rites themselves. With the passage of time, the elderly persons of the affluent class who till yesterday officiated over their family rites and rituals gave up doing so and employed *Pandit/ Purohits* (Brahmins) for this job. The person who served as a *Purohit* by himself was never taken back by the society he belonged to. All of us know that *Pandit Shri Bhatt*, Prime Minister of Bad Shah, *Zain-ul-*

Abadin, was a great reformer and had foresight. He wanted that the *Pandits* who had changed their faith during the Islamic invasion be brought back into the fold of Dharma. They were got purified by the order of the king but their own society did not own them and nicknamed them as '*Buhuri*'. Even today, the Kashmiri society has some reservation with this class as they have with the '*Purohit*' or the priestly class. The sad story is that the temple built at *Vicharnag, Srinagar*, by the progeny of this great reformer is been nicknamed as "*Buhuri' Mandar*" and the local Hindus desist from entering into this temple. Any body from any part of the world can build a place of worship in any part of the valley and the people of that faith readily accept and use it. But that is not the case with Kashmiri *Pandit* society. Though all the Hindus of the valley have only one caste, creed and belong to the same '*Saraswat Gotra*' yet the people who were reconverted to their parental faiths, were not accepted by their own brethren and were declared as "*Melacha*' and the place where they were settled was named as '*Malech Mar*'. They had even their separate '*Purohits*'. This is the only case of mass re-conversion of its kind in the whole history of Kashmiri Hindu society, which, unfortunately, was a complete failure, because the re-conversion put them in a different caste, thought the rites and rituals performed by them are the same as of the rest of the Kashmiri Pandits.

With the advent of Muslim rule in Kashmir, the official language changed to Persian. A large section of the Hindu society took to the study of languages like Persian and Arabic. Here too they left their mark and we have multilingual Kashmiri *Pandit Purohit* luminaries like, *Kalhan Pandit, Pandit Bhawani Dass Kachroo, Brhaman Raja Chandra Bhan, Brhaman Lichiram 'Saroor', Raja Anandram Karihaloo* and others, who made a name in the realm of Persian literature. Things turned from bad to worst during the reign of the Sultans. No *Purohit Pandits* were left in the society who could officiate over the religious rites, ceremonies and rituals. Again, it was during the reign of Bad Shah, *Zain-ul-Abadin* that the society decided to spare their sons-in-law or the elder nephews (from sister's side) to perform the ritualistic activities in a family and they became the *Purohits*. Thus a new class of *Purohits* came up in each

family that was later disowned by the society and given a different caste, '*Goar*' and it became a 'dependent class' living on the doles and favours of the affluent class, the '*Ka:rkun*'. Later in our times, this state of affairs compelled them to take up other means of livelihood to save themselves from progressive poverty and social discrimination. This loose type of priest-hood in Kashmir is unique. In Christianity, the priest is held in esteem and it is the duty of the Church to look after him according to his position in the Order. They have a strong missionary outfit and conversions are open to Christianity and with strong follow-up action. The same is the case with Buddhism and Islam.

No body can deny the fact that the repeated repressions by the alien rulers and numerous migrations from the main land have made some of our rituals difficult to observe but as soon as the society had some peace and prosperity, the rituals and rites flourished again. No doubt, now the priestly class officiating such rites and rituals has almost vanished and a new generation of priestly-class is coming up, that in no way is connected with the profession as it was in the past. It is most likely that our *Sanskars* will get abridged or even changed under the new un-initiated and un-committed class indulging in priest-hood as a side business and it is feared that we might forget and give up some of our rites and rituals, which we have been observing since times immemorial. The present publication is an attempt lest we should forget the nature and observance of our age-old traditions, rituals and rites in the changes that are taking place in Kashmiri Hindu Society for various reasons over which we have no control.

The Women-folk of Kashmiri Hindu Society have done much to keep all these rituals and customs alive to this day and the society has given due place to their efforts and their strict observance of ritualistic performances have been nick-named as 'Ladies Dharama *Shastra*', which, though not available in any written form, has attained the respectability of the 'Fifth Veda'. These rituals and customs, generally called the '*Sanskars*' have been flowing in the form of a rivulet from the high mountain tops, sometimes in full vigour when the circumstances were most conducive and sometimes

in deep-distress under the historically difficult conditions since the very beginning of this society. With the end of every un-favourable condition, these have revived again with more vigour and enthusiasm. Our rituals and customs reflect our wisdom, collected over ages our collective experiences of sorrows, happiness, griefs and hopes. These undergo changes with change in times and history. In this way the forgotten rituals come to the forefront and those, which had a clear currency till yesterday, become obsolescent. But these still revolve round the central Faith - the Dharma. We have been thus perpetuating the civilizational, ethical and cultural heritage in our rituals, customs and festivals. In this way we have been also performing our duty of furthering the cause of our 'Dharma', consciously or unconsciously.

It is most essential to explore the virtues of rituals and customs in a living society in order get an insight into its social, cultural, economic, psychological and anthropological patterns. The '*Kashmir Hindu Sanskars*' (Rituals, rites and customs)- A study, is an attempt towards this end. It is a comprehensive study and includes more details on the subject than recorded hitherto. Every care has been taken to include almost all the details left by the authors of the previous works on the subject. It was felt that they lacked research and scholarship while initiating their work on this subject. But still it is a universally known fact that no-body has been able to speak "the last word" and no-body will do so in future including the humble writer of this book.

Shiv Rratri: **26-2-2006** — ***S.N.*** **Pandit,**

CONTENTS

Chapter one
CIVILIZATION AND RITUALS

Life is a series of perceptions and responses and in turn these form the basic ingredients of human civilization. Every performance of our life comprises two parts - the first part is, "Knowing" and the other is "Doing." In fact while receiving the gift of life from the Almighty, man wished for three blessings, "Knowing", "Seeing" and " Doing." We constantly perceive things, human beings, events and situations (Knowing) and respond to these (Doing). The same is true of all different civilizations of the world having various concepts and religions. Every religion has its own ethos and rituals. With the coming of the world closer, the assimilation and dissimulation of civilizations and cultures has been going on and it has effected our ritualistic conceptions and practices as well.

Every individual is a part and parcel of a society and one or the other civilization encompasses every society. All the great civilizations abound with their scriptural wealth. In the Indian scriptural parlance, life is nothing but '*Janna*' and '*Karma*'. In order to gain knowledge, we need to have faith in whatever we are directed to do or whatever our forefathers have been doing. Faith is instrumental in accomplishing the ultimate goal. We believe and have faith in whatever our sages, seers and saints of yester years have said about our environment. It takes centuries or even more for the civilizations to develop and religion, customs, rituals etc., are all its inseparable components. We should have faith in whatever we are doing and then the goal is accomplished easily, otherwise action without any faith is useless.

Faith is a double-faced phenomenon - "faith" and "blind faith ". Superstition or blind belief, based on ignorance, is a state where there is no desire for

confirmation nor is it subject to any verification. Herein lies the difference because we require the support of faith for understanding or doing something for the first time. But once we practice it, we know what it is and in this way, before doing anything, we require faith. True faith is "*Shraddha*" and it only prevails. If we fail in the first step of an action then to accomplish the remaining portion is useless because true faith is open to experiments and modifications and our knowledge confirms it. The *Bhagwad Gita* says "Every person is what his faith is." i.e., a man is a Hindu because he has faith in Dharma and a Muslim is a Muslim because he has faith in Islam. There can never be a person without faith. A rationalist believes in his reasoning ability. A Communist believes in the theory of Marx. In this way every body has faith in one theory or the other. Man has been an embodiment of faith from the times immemorial and this has guided him in his religious thinking and its rites and rituals. All our actions and re-actions are dictated by our vision and understanding of Dharma which becomes more sacred due to its rites and rituals.

Rituals can sometimes become controversial. A simple ritual may mean differently to different people. But it is faith, that makes the rituals to be followed without any reasoning. We some times negate the whole of it or a part of it, calling it blind faith. But there have been great sages and seers who have retained the legacy of faith along with its rites and rituals and accepted it as a positive force, that can move mountains. Such an approach has kept the Indian civilization alive till date. Some people consider these rituals as superstitions while others are of the view that the Dharma and the rituals are opposed to one another. They feel proud to call themselves as rational thinkers and have a secondary attitude towards people who have faith in these rituals and customs. Some others think that the rationalists are dry and crooked intellectuals given to meaningless and dry thoughts with no foundation. Thus

the haves and have-nots, the opinion makers and the opposition, the people having faith and the rationalists, are all an integral part of this society and preponders of its civilizational aspects. All serve the cause of Dharma, its religion, rituals, customs and rites since the times immemorial and continue to do so till date.

With the coming of independence, the Indian civilization and the society started thinking in a positive manner. To be an Indian is no more considered a curse. The great scholars and thinkers of this land started watering the already withered civilization of the land with the result it began showing signs of growth and life. We also learnt that even in a dormant state, the civilization is the very soul of every society. The development made by us in our leisure time in the fields of education, thought, science, religion, rituals, customs, psychology and economy, are the achievements which we have made over the years of our long history. In other words all these countless ideas and thoughts that have blossomed-forth and developed, have all helped to make our civilization vibrant and colourful. Rituals and customs have been the basic structures of all the great civilizations of the world and the same has been the case with the Indian civilization in general and the Kashmiri society in particular. Rituals and customs affect the daily routine of our life in one-way or the other. Our social life and our aspirations have given rise to our daily rituals and customs. While making progress, the individual came in contact with his brethren living far and near and having different civilizations other than that he possessed. Here he started choosing between different faiths and cultures and thus he carved a way for his betterment and prosperity. His zest for such a life gave rise to rituals and customs. The Hindu *Sanskars* are two fold and lay stress on elevating the lot of an individual[1], both spiritually and morally. The first is through

[1] Pandav, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanakar*, (Varanasi, 1960) p.2.

Malapanayan", i.e. by removing the dirtiness from the human mind and the other is, "*Atishodhan*", i.e. by brightening the human mind by applying practices of higher orders. This can be illustrated thus, the first is by filing a piece of rusted iron with a file and giving it a new glittering shape and the other is like giving a sparkling surface to a piece of wood by applying synthetic paints and polish, etc. The first is to brighten the inner conscience whereas the latter believes in polishing the outer aspects. Thus the *Sanskars* purify ones inner-self known as the '*Atman*' and also the outer body. Great scholars have classified the *Sanskars* into two categories :-

1. Those, which elevate us to the heights, and
2. Those that drag us down to the deep abyss.

Some of the Indian scholars propose sixteen *Sanskars* whereas others give a list of forty-eight *Sanskars*. Commonly sixteen *Sanskars* are in vogue in the whole sub-continent and the valley of Kashmir has the exception of following twenty-four *Sanskars* as a special case.[1] The main aim of all these *Sanskars* is to purify the inner conscience of man either through "*Malapanayan*" or through" *Atishodhan*". This purification is also two fold, the former is meant to liberate ones self from the sins and ignorance and the latter is to give more luster and brightness to his wisdom and knowledge, which he has already acquired or is in the process of acquiring it. There is a choice before every man. He has choice either for elevation of his own self or for degradation to the unknown depths of hell. Man can either be good or bad according to his bent of mind. All the religions of the world agree to the fact that every one is born with a Divine Spark in him and no one is good or bad from birth. Our *Sanskars* play a major role in illuminating our future though the part played by one's '*Bhagya*' and '*Karma*' cannot be totally ignored. In the Indian civilizational

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[1] Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanakar*, (Varanasi, 1960) p.2

context the instinct believing in higher values is called '*Daivi*' and that which lays emphasis on physical enjoyment and materialism, is called '*Asuri*' The '*Daivi*' tendencies and qualities lead to the liberation whereas '*Asuri*' qualities lead one towards degradation. Greed and temptations lead us to a deplorable situation. Urge for more than what is necessary for ones livelihood is greed. Lust or greed is the main cause of all mental and physical ailments. In order to draw a line to control such emotions and to save the individual and the society from such ailments, *Sanskars* come like a boon to save our society and us. Thus *Sanskars* invoke the inner voice of a man and educate him to discriminate between the good and the bad. One, who knows how to differentiate between the good and the bad, is owned by society. In this way *Sanskars* change the direction of the mind of a person. Once he comes into the fold of the Dharma, he gets deliverance from the sins and the sinful life. In this way Sanskars save a person from making spiritual degradation that is worse than the individual suicide.

The preponders of the *Darshan Shastra* are of the opinion that *Sanskars* affect the very soul of a man. On the other hand the followers of *Vedantic* philosophy confirm that *Sanskars* change the mind of a person and these have nothing to do with his soul or '*Atma*', which, they consider, is above all these considerations. Actually the *Sanskars* purify the mind and soul of a man and dispel his ignorance and darkness just like a diamond, which attains its value and brightness when it is cut and shaped by an expert. In this way *Sanskars* elevate and lead a person from degradation to salvation.

The *Sanskars* prevalent in a society/civilization at one time cannot be expected to continue indefinitely. There is interaction between various civilizations and occasionally one civilization proves more forceful and subdues the other one or even annihilates it completely. This civilizational amalgamation gives birth to a new

civilization, which may be quite different from the old one. In case, however, the two interacting civilizations get synthesized, the new civilization that emerges thus, is a combination of the two. Environmental behaviours like social, economic, political or psychological, strongly affect the ideas of an individual and also his dress, language and literature. In this way we can see such changes take place in the social set-up, society and the civilization as well.

We know that the aliens have invaded India a number of times. Some of them were only plunderers while others invaded her for making India their permanent home. A few among these were travelers and missionaries who came here to study our culture and civilization. All these upheavals had a very deep effect on the way of our living and thinking. The influences in certain cases were reciprocal and in this way a mixed social and cultural order sprouted forth which is known as the modern Indian civilization. This change had its sway over the whole sub-continent including Kashmir. For instance let us take the contact between Islam and Hinduism. Before the advent of Islam into the valley, the Hindus mostly populated Kashmir. They had their own way of living and worship. Every big and small temple thronged with the populace and every devotee sang devotional chorus songs according to one's own faith and belief, besides performing his individual religious rites and rituals. After their conversion to the new faith they were asked to offer their '*Nimaz*' in a mosque and perform their other Islamic tenets accordingly. They readily agreed to all the new patterns of offering prayers. However, they lamented for the age-old practice of singing chorus while offering prayers. It was keeping in view this tendency of the local populace that the missionaries of Islam had to introduce a choric form of devotional singing known as '*Manqabat*' (a chorus song in praise of God) and '*Darud Khani*' (a chorus song in praise of Prophet *Mohammad*) for the first time in Islam and that

too for the recent converts in Kashmir. It was the newly emerged culture, which introduced '*Rov*' (a kind of folk dance and singing performed by ladies on certain occasions including marriages) instead of traditional '*VanIvun*'. The '*VanIvun*' of the Hindus on such occasions was quite different in content and pattern from the new form, called '*Rov*'. The former has a '*Sophistic*' singing pattern on the recitation of the '*Vedic Richas*' whereas the latter comprises a to-and-fro dancing rhythm of ladies chorus singing in a semi-circular formation. With the passage of time the whole Kashmiri society accepted the new '*Rov*' form of singing whereas the '*VanIvun*' (generally called the '*BaTI VanIvun*') is fading away. Not only this, we continue to use certain words for ritualistic praxis. For example, the Hindus purchase some ingredients like dry fruits, candy, ghee and barley etc., for marriages, '*Yagnyopavita*', or for any other religious rituals and is commonly known as "*AgnI VAtIr* " as a whole. All these components are offered to the sacred fire called "*Agni*", while chanting hymns from the scriptures, according to a particular ritual or Sanskar. Hence, it is called "*AgnI VAtIr.*" Muslims too use the same word while purchasing spices, dress-materials on the occasion of marriages, etc. There is a common word, '*PrA:vish*'[1] for both the communities for entering into a new house. These facts depict the reciprocity that the followers of the two religions had achieved while entering and adopting the Indian way of living.

Let us ponder a bit deeper and delve into root cause of a Kashmiri Hindu being more influenced by the doctrine of "*Ahimsa*". All our deities and gods in their all shapes and forms possess one or the other weapon. It may either be an axe or a sword, a bow and an arrow or a trident that they used against a tyrant, absolute and cruel

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[1] It is derived from the root Sanskrit word, '*Pravesh*'. A list of such common vocabulary can be lengthy and may involve a separate study.

so as to protect the kind and the noble. Contrary to this, the use of a weapon even against a tyrant is not so common among the Kashmiris. The reason is clear that the Brahmanism over powered all other *Varnas* and, thus the doctrine of "*Ahimsa*" became more vigorous. Religions like Jainism and Buddhism, which originated from the Indian soil and were propagated by some of the renowned scholars of Kashmir, made the conception of '*Ahimsa*' more potent.

2. *ASPECTS OF NATURE WORSHIP IN OUR RITUALS*

Hindu religion is, in fact, a multi-dimentional civilization in which various aspects and secrets of nature are discussed, described and sung. The under-developed thoughts of primitive man and his budding revolt against adverse natural phenomenon are all embedded in his scriptures. That is why almost all our scriptures, *Vedas, Purans, Shastras* and even Epics etc., contain ample references to almost all aspects of Nature which contain universal acceptability. We have references about this whole universe and of its living and non-living elements. The impact of Nature-worship is so deep on our daily life and deeds that we feel our self greatly under its influence. Our most common associates in life are the sun, the moon, the earth, the rivers, the trees, the animal so on and so forth. *Vedas* and our *Grahisutras* give a vivid picture of the planet we inhabit. These tell us that *'Omkar'* is the root of this universe; feet, legs, body and arms are its extended branches. *Rgved* is its leaves, *Samved* is its flowers, *Yajurved* is its fruit and the *Atharvaved* is its dignity. '*Yajnya*' is its cool-sweet shadow. Always chanted by the learned Brahmins, morning, noon and evening, are its time limits [1]. Concluding the couplet, '*Richa*', the author pays homage to the all-powerful 'Mother' Goddess, '*Ga-ya-tri*', a combination of three letters in the *Devanagri* script, as our ultimate saviour. He also prays for the good health and well being of not only his own self but also for this whole universe including the sun, the moon, the stars, and the rivers and rivulets. At the very start of a religious ritual, whether a small one like the daily prayer or a big one like the Sacred Thread Ceremony, there is the benedictory ritual of worshiping the *Agni*, the Sun, the Moon, *Brahma* and a cluster of

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[1] Bhatt. Pt. Keshav. *Mekhala Pustak*, 1925, P. 1.

twenty one *Rishis* (Appendix I. P - 19) etc. In all the twenty-four *Sanakars* and other religious rites including the marriage, the *Ashrams* of *Grahasth, Vanprasth, Sannyas* and the last rites, obeisance to the Mother Earth named, *'Bhu:mi Pu:jan'* is essential at the start of every ritual. It mentions, 'May our days prosper. May this earth and its mountains prosper. May this whole world flourish including our king. May this Mother Earth bear this of my ritual and enable me to complete it[1].

The present religious tenets have the concurrence of a politically bound and advanced culture since the times immemorial. The factors like topography, geography, dialect, economic and racial differences do influence it, locally. It is impossible to deny the presence and the survival of ancient cultural impacts in spite of all the upheavals experienced by the people of this region from time to time. The experience of the past stages of human behaviours does reflect in one way or the other in the activity of human society in various forms of religious activities. Like all other civilizations, the religious rituals too have two distant but main streams. One flows among the educated people in the form of *Vedas, Upanishads* and other branches of higher learning and literature and the second one among the uneducated mass of people. This appears to be the main reason that the highly educated *Brahmins* had a sway over all other sects and *Varnas* in the ancient/medieval Indian society as no one could disassociate oneself from performing the *Sanskars* in a family so as to keep one in its fold. The *Sanskars* involved educational training essential for the betterment of an individual and hence the *Brahmins* having an upper hand over general masses, seems imperative.

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[1] Bhatt. Pt. Keshav. *Mekhala Pustak,* 1925, P. 22

It is an admitted fact that Dharma is not only religion but also a way of Indian living. Let us take some of the religious praxis in our daily life that we perform or have been advised to perform by our *Vedas/ Upnishads* and which are directly related to the environment around us. The *Upnishads* forbid a person, among other things, from defecation or urination in the open, especially on the surface of naked earth. Stress is laid on using grassy lands or pit like formations for such things if there is no other alternative. Washing of mouth is preceded by washing of feet and before that we pay our respects to the rivulet with the words, '*Namastay Jalashayini*', 'Oh source of water, I pay my salutations to you'. While washing our face, we pay our obeisance to holy places and rivers like, *Prayag, Pushkar, Ganga,* etc. Before paying our respect to gods, *Rishis* and forefathers, we have been asked to pay our salutations to the sun, the saviour of Dharma on this earth. The very fact that all our gods/deities have different animal for their conveyance, show the love that we have for animal. All the gods/deities could have used a single animal to ride but that would have imbalanced the scale of nature. This appears the main reason that from as big an animal as an elephant to the smallest, a rat, every animal has been assigned with a rider deity/god according to our holy scriptures.

The construction of a house for ones dwelling has been the first priority of man from primitive times. He felt this need so as to save himself from natural change in his immediate surroundings, i.e., excessive heat, cold, wind and rain, It also sheltered him and his family from the untimely and unwanted attack from the wild beasts and his enemies. While wishing to possess a dwelling for himself, he showed affection to some of the wild/tamed animal, which, he felt, would prove as his helpers in his future ventures. It is because of this very fact that primitive man included and tamed a number of animal for

his personal use and some of these have proved as an asset to him and continue to do so till date. Keeping the usefulness of some of these animals in view, it appears that he, while laying the foundation for a residential dwelling, gave due place and reverence to such animal. The scriptures contain that, while laying the foundation stone for a dwelling, called '*Bhu:mi Pu:jan*', due place and honour be given to a number of animal that have stood by man through thick and thin and helped him directly or indirectly. The scriptures clearly name that the following animal be worshipped at the four corners and the center of the house at the time of laying the foundation and their images be placed under the plinth of the proposed house: -[1]

1. North-east corner -- Ox,
2. South-east corner -- Horse,
3. North-west corner -- Elephant,
4. North-west corner -- Man, and
5. Center -- Serpent

This seems to be the highest honour, that the Indian society has bestowed on the animal and appears to be of its unique kind in all other world civilizations.

Kashmir has been a land of holy sites from the times immemorial and in the words of Kalhan, 'there is not a space as large as a seasmum (seed) without a *tirth*' [2] and in the words of Alberuni, the great traveler and historian, 'Kashmir held the same position among the holy places as *Varanasi* or *Kurukshetra* has in the Indian ethos. [3] During all these centuries the *Vitasta* has witnessed a number of devastating floods and the

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[1] Bhatt Pt. Keshav, *Ved Kalpadrum, 'Shanku Pratishtha,'* Bombay, 1921, Pt. II, P. 159.

[2] *Rajatarangini,* I. 38. Translated by M.A. Stein, Vol. .I, (Reprint), 1979, p. 9.

[3] *Al-Beruni's India*, Eng. Tr. Edward C. Sichuan, London, 1910. Vol. II, P 146.

religious rituals and customs have deeply been buried under the layers of its muddy waters. But that will not prevent the sons and daughters of *Vitasta* from understanding and compiling the practices, rituals and the religious prescriptions followed by our forefathers. Though the toil is tiresome yet the outcome cannot be less rewarding. In the sweet message of our '*Vedas*', 'Let us all adopt the path of enlightenment'- '*Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya.*'

3 *GOTRA* -
THE LIVING LEGENDS OF KASHMIR RISHIS

Brahma, the Creator of this universe, in the beginning of the first *Manvantra*, created nine Rishis for the inhabitation of this earth. They are *Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulha, Vishvamitr, Bharadwaj, Gautam and Jamadagni. Maharshi Marichi* was the greatest among these, because he became the main cause of establishing the human society on this earth and is, therefore, called the '*Prajapati.*' *Kashyap*, the son of *Atri* married *Kadru* and *Vanita*. *Kadru* gave birth to the *Nagas* and from *Vanita, Garud* was born. The *Nagas* and the *Garuda*, being stepbrothers, had well-known enmity between them. Vishnu, on seeing that the *Garuda* was persecuting the *Nagas*, gave them asylum in the *Sati Sara* under the protection of Nila, the son of *Kashyap*. The position remained unchanged during the *Kalp* till the end of the 6th *Manu*.

In the beginning of the 7th *Kalp* of *Manu Vaivasuta*, a water-born demon of the *Sati Sara*, named *Jalodbhav*, let loose a reign of terror in the whole area around *Sati Sara*. How could *Nila Nag*, the head of the Kashmir Nagas remain untouched? Having been harassed by the demon, *Nila* related the whole story to his father *Kashyap*. *Kashyap* took the matter to *Brahma* and, he, accompanied by *Vishnu* and other gods reached *Kaunsarnag*. The gods took their positions on the high peaks of the mountain ranges. The demon had earlier got a boon from *Brahma* that he would be all-powerful in water but would loose his powers on land The gods waited for the water-demon to come out of water of the *Sati Sara* but he did not come out. Finally *Vishnu*, with the help of his brother, *Balabhadra*, pierced the bottom of the lake with his ploughshare from *Vitasta:tra (Vye'thIvo>tur}* to *Varahamula (Varamula or Baramula)*. Thus the water of the big lake was drained and land

appeared here and there at its bottom. Here god *Vishnu* cut the demon to pieces with the help of his disk. *Kashyap* was accompanied by a good number of *Rishis* including his sons on his Kashmir mission, which he had started from the plains. He advised all of them to settle in the recently created valley of Kashmir. The *Rajatarangini* gives a poetic description of the first Naga settlement in the valley. It narrates that the *Sati (Vitasta)* in the form of a river served as a stalk to the great round lotus umbrella-shaped spring of *Nila (Nila Nag or Verinag)* who was asked to head all the *Nagas* who resided in the valley due to the fear from *Garud*. This expression is to hint at the first arrival of the *Aryans* into the valley who, being superior to the native dwellers, got an upper hand on them and started their territorial extensions and cultural amalgamation in the valley. The amalgamation remained calm at the surface but it had an under current which gave vent a little later and was felt just before the start of the *Kali* era. This can well be judged from the fact that the later dwellers of the valley were compelled to make a treaty with the *Pishachas* - (the original dwellers) to remain in the valley for the first six months of the year and migrate to the plains for the second half of the year. In this way the migration from the plains to the valley started in the spring on the 1st *Navaratra*, which falls on the 1st day of the bright half of *Chaitra*. The return journey started during the autumn *Navaratra* falling on the 1st. day of the bright half of *Ashwin*. These migratory people observed certain ceremonies and rituals on these auspicious days of their yearly migration, which, on the one hand resembled the "*Navratra*' festivals and, on the other hand, appeared in consistence with the present day "*Darbar Move*". It may not be out of place to mention here that there were certain local differences among the people living in the plains and those living in the far-flung areas of the valley while observing these *Navaratra* festivals. The *Rajatarangini* and the *Nilamat Puran* also

confirm it. The recent exodus of the people from the valley has, perhaps, brought us more close to our brethren of the sub-continent as far as the *Navaratr* celebrations are concerned.

The *Nilamat* starts with a conversation between sage *Vaishampayan* and king *Janmejay* as to why the rulers of this great land- Kashmir did not take part in the Great *Mahabharat* War. Taking the story of the *Puran* a bit further, it clearly gives a hint to the rivalry, which the early migrants had to face with their foes - the *Pishachas*, the original inhabitants of the valley. In this narration of assimilation and dissimilation, the *Puran* gives a clear and vivid picture of the different sects residing in the valley then. The *Puran* also hints at the mutual confrontation, which might have been going on at various religious, economic and other fronts. Because of the curse from *Kashyap,* the *Puran* narrates, the *Nagas* dwelt in the valley for six months only and the *Pishachs* occupied the land for the remaining six cold months of the year. Due to this new set up of inhabitation periods agreed to for the year, the newcomers to the valley were unable to perform their traditional customs and rituals previously agreed to with the *Pishachs* and the *Naga* chief, *Nila.* With the result the successors of *Kashyap* and their followers did not follow the traditional path and thus distress befell on them. The result was that they were obliged to leave for the plains for a period of six months so as to save themselves from the severe cold that befell on the land and its people due to the said curse. On the other hand the *Pishachs* continued to maintain their old rites, hence they were saved from the severe clod.

According to Buhler's report on the *Nilamat Puran*, four *Yugas* passed and at the end of this period a distressed old *Brahman,* descendent of the *Kashyap Gotra*, named *Chandra Dev* practiced austerities to please *Nila Nag. Nila* was pleased with the austerity of *Chandra Dev* and he relieved the *Brahmin* and his followers from

the afflictions of excessive cold and snowfall. He advised him and his followers to perform some of the old and forgotten rites as mentioned in the *Nilamat Puran*. All these praxis resembled the usual *Brahminical* and *Pauranic* rites and rituals with certain peculiarities suiting the residents of the valley. In this way we can safely say that *Nilamat Puran* contains the description of revival of the old rites and rituals, which were prevalent in the valley during the *Pauranic* period.

The *Rarjatarangini* does not contain a clear reference to the number of Rishis who accompanied *Kashyap*. In verse 1-30 Kalhan gives a reference of the nine guardians of the treasures *(Nagas)* who decorated the land of Kashmir just like *Alkapuri*, the famous city of *Kuber*, the guardian of all treasures[1]. The *Bhagwat Puran* narrates clearly that the *Prajapatis* are 14 in number and they have given rise to various tribes or *'gotras'* in this world. P. N. K. Bamzai has given a reference to 133 exogamous *gotras*, the followers/ descendents of a *Rishi* whose name the *gtora* bears. He, however, confirms that the *Rishis*, in whose name the *gotras* are established, were of the highest order of the *Brahmins*- the *"Saraswats"*[2]. This appears more close to the present number of *gotras* existing among the Kashmiri Pandits.

The followers of different religions, like Jainism, *Buddhism*, *Islam* and *Christianity* had their respective impacts on the Kashmir society since their entry into the valley with the result that the use of *'gotra'* remained confined only to the Pandits of the Kashmir valley whereas its essence was lost in the social positions of different other castes. In the ancient Indian traditions, a person was known by the *gotra* he belonged to and this determined his status in the society. But with the passage

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[1] *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*. Trans. By M.A. Stein, 1979, Pt.I (VI- i.30) P.6.

[2] Bamzai, P.N.K., *A History of Kashmir*, 1973, p. 18. Also see *'Modern India and the Indians'* by Monier William, P. 151.

of time the nature of occupation followed by a man, generally determined his social status. Thus the use of *gotra* among the Kashmiri *Pandits* remained confined to rites and religious ceremonies alone.

Today there are approximately one hundred and twenty four known *gotras* among the Kashmiri Pandits. Of these twenty-one *gotras,* as mentioned in Appendix I, are started by a single *Rishi,* whereas the remaining one hundred and three *gotras* appear to be an outcome of an exogamous marriages between the *Rishis* of two or more clans having different *gotras* that existed then in the valley, Appendix II.

APPENDIX -I

(A) GOTRAS OF THE 1ST ORDER

1. *Agastya.*
2. *Atreya*
3 *Aupamanya*
4. *Bhardwaja*
5. *Bhargava*
6. *Datatreya*
7 *Daumanya*
8 *Gargay*
9 *Gautama*
10. *Kapishthala*
11 *Kashapa*
12 *Kashyapa*
13 *Kaushika*
14 *Lougakshi*
15 *Moudgalya*
16 *Parashara*
17 *Pipla*
18 *Shandalya*
19 *Vasistha*
20 *Varshayini* and

21. *Vishvamitra*

Appendix II

(B) GOTRAS OF THE MIXED ORDER

1 .Artha Varshagnya Shandalya
2. Atri Bhargava
3 Bhava Aupamanya
4. Bhava Kapishathala
5. Bhava Kapishthala Aupamanya
6, Bhava Kapishthala Kaushika
7. Bhuta Aupamanya Shalankayana
8. Bhuta Vas Vatsya Laugakshi
9. BhutaVas Bhuta Aupamanya
10.Bhuta Vatsya Aupamanya
11 Dhara Baradwaja
12. Dhara Deva Shalan Kaushika
13. Dhara Kapishta Aupamanya
14 Dhara Shandalya
15. Dhara Kapishthala
16. Data Data Shalan Kaushta
17. Deva Aupamanya
18. Deva Bharadwaja
19 Deva Parashara
20. Deva Vasistha
21 Deva Vishwamitra Varshayana
22 .Dipta Swamina Aupamanya
23 Deva Varshagnya Shandalya
24 Datasharman Kantha Kashayapa
25 Data Varshayana
26. Data Vasadeva Bharadwaja aushika
27. Deva Gargya
28. Deva Gautama
29. Deva Gautama Laugakshya
30 Deva Kaushika
31. Deva Kauchha treya
32 Deva Laugakshi
33 Deva Kashyapa Modgalya Kashyapa
34 Deva Pala Swamina Kaushika
35 Deva Shandalya
36 Deva Shandalya Modgalya -
37 Gausha Watsyana Aupanamya
38 Isha Shandalya Kausha
39. Kantha Daumayana
40. Kantha Kashapa

41. Kantha Kashyapa
42. Kaushika Bharadwaja.
43. Kara Chhanda Shandalya
44. Kara Shandalya
45. Kasha Aupamanya.
46. Laugakshi Gautama.
47. Mitra Kashyapa.
48. Mitra Sandalya
49. Mitra Swamina Kaushika Atreya
50. Nanda Kaushika Bharadwaja
51. Pala Deva Vasa Gargya
52. Patha Swamina Kaushika Deva Parashara.
53. Pallia Swamina Deva Ratra Pravara.
54 .Ratra Bhargava
55. Raja Dhattatreya.
56. Raja Kaushika
57. Rishi Kaushika.
58. Rishi Kavi Gargya
59. Raja Shandalya.
60. Ratra Varshayana.
61. Raja Vasistha.
62. Raja Data Atreya Shalan Kautsa
63 Raja Bhuta Laugakshi
64 Raja Kaushika Devala.
65. Ratra Vishwamitra.
66. Ratra Vishwamitra Vasistha Agastya
67. Sharman Kautsa.
68. Shala Kautsa Sharman
69. Swamina Gautama Laugakshi
70. Swamina Shandalya
71. Swamina Vasishtha.
72. Swamina Vasa Gargaya..
73. Swamina Vas Atreya.
74. Swamina Laugakshi
75. Sharman Bhardwaja Shandalya.
76. Swamina Bhargava.
77. Swazmina Varshaganya
78. Swamina Kaushika.
79. Swamina Bharadwaja..
80. Swamina Modgalya.
81. Swamina Atareya.
82. Swanima Moudagalya.
83 .Swamina Bardwaja Vas Atreya.
84. Swamina Gargya.
85. Swamina Gautama Atreya Shala Kuchha
86. Sharman Atreya.
87. Swamina Ganakaushika.
88 Swamina. Gautama Bharadwaja.
89. Swamina Gautama Shandalya.
90. Sawmina Gautama Gasha Vasa Aupamanya.
91. Swamina Gautama Atreya.
92. Swamina Hasya Dvaseya.
93. Swamina Kaushika.
94. Swamina Kantha.Kashipa.
95. Swamina Rishi Kavya Gargya.
96. Swamina Aupamanya.
97. Swamina Kochha Bharadwaja
98. Sawmina Vatsya Aupamanya.
99. Vatsa Gosha Aupamanya.
100. Vatsa Swamina Maudgalya.
101. Vasadeva Pala Gargya.
102. Varshaganya Vasishtha

103. Vasishta Vishwamitra Varadatta.

Chapter two

our RITUALS

The rituals, which have got the sanction of the religion or the *Dharma* of the concerned society, survive for a longer period than those, which the society adopts by imitation from other societies or civilizations. Besides, the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*, the *Bhagwad Gita*, which is considered to be the essence of all the *Vedas* and *Puranas* and which depicts a way of life for the whole Indian society, in its third canto (a treatise on *Karma-Yoga* in couplets 10-15), clearly lays emphasis on the sanctity of rituals which have accompanied the *Dharma* from the very beginning. Before entering into the realm of rituals of the Indian society one has to make great sacrifices. Sacrifices not in the form of making bodily penance or killing of any living thing but in the form of killing ones own enemies found in ones own self in the form of *Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada* and *Ahankara* - the six demons which hamper our faith in *Dharma* and its rituals. Here the individual is left to seek the help of a guide who can prove to be saviour to his *Dharma*. Once the faith dwindles, the six enemies referred to above surface to the forefront and the preacher or the teacher and the *Dharma* and its rituals prove meaningless accessories and activities. On the other hand if we have strong faith in our *Dharma* and the normal activities connected with it, none of the demons will dare to raise its head. No doubt, occasionally some of our actions may be, unknowingly or due to our ignorance, against the religious principles and yet we have the comfort of its redressal by our *Guru*/teacher or a deity.

We develop complete faith in a person or an object that we believe will stand by us and help us in our happiness and in sorrow. This notion develops faith in God, - the *Dharma*, and the rituals. This faith is nothing

more or less than complete surrender to Him without any 'doubt' or 'questioning' which lead one to a hell like state. The former mode of thought has given birth to the world civilizations, which in turn prove as a torch of light for man to analyse what is right and what is wrong. Rituals make *Dharma* more acceptable and charming. Rituals and customs exist in one way or the other [1] among the people of the world having different faiths. These have continued in our society as well since times immemorial and are present in our society in their original form or with certain modifications that the society thought necessary to incorporate in them from time to time. In ancient times these were followed more vigorously and they continue till date though with certain curtailments[2]. The need of the hour is a society that can cause the regeneration of such rituals and customs. The betterment of man, his society and the civilization as a whole has always been the aim and object of these rituals and customs.

The Kashmiri Hindus generally agree to the twenty-four *Sanskars* unlike their Indian counterparts who follow sixteen (*Shodasha) Sanskars* only, that cover the human life from pre-natal existence till death - the last journey. The treatises named, *Agni Puran, Parasar Grahi Sutra, Yajnavalkya Smriti, Manu Smriti,* etc., all lay emphasis on *Shodash* (sixteen) *Sanskars* except *Ashulayan Grahi Sutra*, which lays emphasis on eleven *Sanskars. Veda Kalpadrum*, and the Kashmir *Karma Kanda*, lay emphasis on twenty-four [3] *Sanskars. Parasar Grahi Sutra* and *Vaikhans Grahi Sutra* lay stress on thirteen and sixteen Sanskars respectively.

Our scriptures have generally given a life span of one hundred years to an individual- "*Jeeva Sharada*

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[1] Payday, Raj Bali- *Hindu Sanskar* (Varanasi, 1960) p.2
[2] Ibid., p.3.
[3] Ibid., p.26

Shatam"- Let you live for one hundred autumns. Hindu life span comprises four parts of twenty-five years each known as the "*Ashrams*" detailed below: -

1. *Brahmacharya Ashram* up to 25 years. (which includes *Bal-awastha* also).
2. *Grahasth Ashram* (family life) 25 to 50 years.
3. *Va:nprasth Ashram*, (detachment from family life) from 50 to75 years
4. *Sannyas Ashram*. (Life in a hermitage or total detachment from the world) from 75 to 100 years.

This division of human life involves certain rituals and customs. These are as follows : -

(I) Pre-natal Sanskars and rituals.

1. *Garbhadhan* or *Bijwapan* - the ceremony and the ritual of fertilization
2. *Simantonayan*, confinement to a particular limited space or a room of the house during pregnancy.
3. *Pumswan* - The rituals connected with having a male child.

(II) Post-birth Sanskars and Rituals including those of the Brahamcharva Ashram.

(A) Rituals connected with the *Bala Awastha* or state of infancy: -

1. *Jatkaran*, the birth rituals of purifying the child and the mother.
2. *Namkaran*, the ritual of giving a suitable name to the child.
3. *Nishkraman*, taking the child out from the boundaries of the house

4. *AnI-Pra:shan*, giving solid food to the child for the first time.
5. *Mundan* or *ZarI-Ka:say*, to clip or shave the hair of the child for the first time.
6. *Karana- Bedha*, to pierce the ear lobes of the child for the first time.

(B) Rituals connected with *Brahamcharya Ashram* or adolescence; -

1. *Vidhyarambha* - the introduction of the alphabet.
2. *Yagnyopavita*, - the Holy Thread Ceremony.

(III) Sanskars and Rituals connected with the Grahasth Ashram.

1. *Vivah*, - the marriage ceremony.
2. *Grahasth Ashram*, duties of married life.

(IV) The Va:nprasth Ashram –a life away from the family and its struggle.

(V) The Sannyas Ashram — the period of seclusion and detachment from the family and the world.

(VI) Rituals and customs pertaining to the Anteshti, -

Death or the last rites.

In addition to the above mentioned *Sanskars*, there are other specific rituals connected with our day-to-day life and our socio-economic and political set-up. All these have, as far as possible, been given due place and description at their proper places.

(I) PRE -NATAL SANSKARS AND RITUALS.

Out of all the twenty-four Sanskars, the first three. i.e., *Bijwapan/Garbhadhan, Simantonayan* and the *Pumsawan* come under this category.

1.Bijwapan or Garbhadhan - The Conception or Fertilization Ritual

This is a pre-birth ceremony wherein the concerned lady is brought before the ritual *Agni*. Her *Kula Guru* purifies her by spraying holy water on her forehead while chanting the relevant Vedic hymns in the presence of *Agni.*

According to the *Grahisutras*, this ritual is held during the third month of pregnancy. Though this ritual is not in vogue now but still we find a glimpse of it on the eve of *Yagnyopavita* ceremony. It forms the first/ second *Sanakar* on the eve of this function.

2. Simantonayan. - Confinement to a particular space or portion of the house.

This pre-birth ceremony is performed after the third month of pregnancy. Offerings are made to the ritual *Agni* in the form of ghee and condiments etc. The *Kula Guru* purifies the pregnant lady and her husband with sprinkling holy water on both of them while reciting hymns from the Holy Scriptures. Two small sticks cut from "*Sa:l*" or '*Mulberry*' tree branches measuring nearly nine inches and duly venerated by the priest are presented by the husband to his wife and after taking the sticks in her hands, she makes cross–marks three times with these sticks before her face and then inserts them into her hair in such a way that her hair locks are separated into two

equal parts. While doing so she takes a solemn oath to behave like a matured and responsible lady and avoid being away from her residential house on odd hours during the period of her pregnancy. Then the lady makes two separate plaits of her hair and she is again offered duly purified two *Sa:l/Mulberry* sticks along with a knot of *'NA:rivan'* (a kind of red rough thread generally used by the Hindus as a wrist band on all auspicious occasions). The husband presents the two sticks along with the thread to his wife, who has to sit on the left side of her husband on all such auspicious and religious occasions. The husband binds the hair of the lady into two plaits with this thread and throws away the sticks.

All this appears to be a superstitious exercise to day but the ritual denotes much extended values prevalent in the society since long. One should imagine the festive occasion for the family when such a good news was revealed to its members in those days when disease, death, floods, famines and starvation would annihilate a good number of densely populated areas in the twinkling of an eye especially the new born. The occasion must have been worth celebrating. Utmost care was taken for the safety of the pregnant lady. She was forbid from doing more strenuous chores and every body in the family helped her. Any stranger or a person who entered the house late or at odd hours, was not allowed to approach the lady directly. Though there were no hard and fast rules for the purpose, yet the ritual survived in the society till date.

In order to indicate that she has a special position in the family, a piece of brocade, a kind of a special, bright cloth, commonly known as, *'Zarba:ph'* is folded in a triangular form and filled with a few seeds of sesame and chalk powder and then stitched to her head-gear commonly known as *'Kalpush'* or fastened to her hair locks. This social function resembled with our ritual known as "*NA:rivan Kha:rIni'*, held on the eve of

'*Yagnyopavita*' ceremony. Thus the lady is dressed in a spectacular dress so that every new comer could identify her from a distance and conduct himself according to the set procedure. As for as the position of women in ancient India is concerned, this *Sanskar* appears to have been of much importance but is now considered just a custom and it has gradually lost all its great social and ethical significance. The forces behind it's falling into disuse can be found in our man-dominated society.

3 Pumsawan–The Rituals Connected with having a Male Child.

This *Sanskar* is performed by the family on the expiry of eight months of pregnancy as is clearly depicted in the *Samhita* [1]. The couple is brought to the *Yajnya Shala* and holy water is sprinkled on them. Offerings to the *Agni Deva, Indra Deva* and Lord *Vishnu* are made in three separate plates containing cooked rice, condiments and barley/sesame respectively. The offerings are made to the flames along with ghee amidst recitation from the *Vedas*. Prayers are made that the lady may be bestowed with a male child and deliver the same after completing eight months of her conception, i.e. in the beginning of the tenth month. '*Janayati Putram ashtamay masya sutavi*', goes the *Vedic* hymn. Here too it is clear that the society had a keen desire for a male child. '*Putram*' from the very inception, which indicates a high preference for a male child in the male dominated society. *Panini*, the great Sanskrit grammarian, gives the derivation of son (*putra*) like this, '*Pum namam Narkam trayatay yah sa eva Putrah.*' This rite, now reduced to a negligible function, is completed on the eve of the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony.

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[1] Bhatt, Pt. Keshav , *Mekhala Pustak,* 1925, '*Upanayan*' , P 40.

There is hardly any practice of singing and dancing on the eve of the conception of a baby in our modern society. But our folk songs hint at such practices. In this connection these lines are worth consideration :-

Ma:ji tso<pnas tsAndra:yunye
MA:li ko>rnas zi:va:da:n
Asi santa:n go>tsh a:sunye.
Kor kunyi pherIni dra:v.
Ja:y yali kArmas garbas manz .
Tso>k mo>dur hyo>tun tsha:nDunIye.
Kor kunye,,,,,,,,,,,,

Translation:

The mother kept the '*Chandra:yan Vrita.*
The father gave life to it,
All this was done just to have a child (in the family)
Where has he gone just for strolling?
When it was first conceived in the womb.
She started looking for sweet and sour dishes.
Where has he ......?

Chandra:yan is one of the most tedious '*Vritas*' requiring utmost austerity. The process extends over a month's period that includes physical as well as ritualistic practices. In the form of actions, it may include circumambulation of a sacred place of a deity or a place of worship and performance of '*Hawans*,' etc. These practices are regulated according to waxing and waning of the moon. The austerity starts on the first day of the bright fortnight of either '*Chaitra Shukla* (March-April), or *Ashwin Shukla* (September-October), considered as the most auspicious months of the year for such austerities. The ascending order of '*Vrita*' starts from first day of the waxing moon and continues up to the full moon day (*Puranmashi*) and after that the descending order starts till the last day of the dark fortnight (*Amawasya*). Accordingly the physical and the ritualistic practices go

on waxing and waning as per the calendar of the moon for the specific month.

(II) Post-birth *Sanskars* and Rituals Including the *Brahamcharya Ashram.*

1. The birth of a child.
2 *'Truy:'*, The third day's rituals.
3. *'Shra:nSo>ndar,'* First ritualistic and medicinal bath,
4. *'Jatkarn'*, *Kaha Ne'thIr,* The birth rituals,
5 *'Namkarn'*, Giving a name to the new born,
6. *Nishkraman 'Ma:sI Ne'thIr'*, Rituals on the expiry of one month,
7. *'Tsatji:him Shra:n'* Fortieth day bath.
8 *'AnnI Pra:shun'*, Serving of solid food for the first time.
9. *'Kan tso>mbIni' 'Karan Bedha'*-Piercing of ear lobes.
10. *'Vo>har Vo<d'* or *'Janam Din'* Birthday celebrations.
11 *'ZarI Ka:say'*, *'Mundan'*- To shave the hair of the baby for the first time.
12. *'MangtI Anun'* – Adoption of a child.

1. The Birth Of a Child

The birth of a baby is considered as a matter of great joy in almost all civilizations of the world. The birth of a child is the greatest pleasure and a pious hour in a man's life and when the newborn is a male, the joyous celebrations become two-fold. All the members of the family celebrate this event together with their relatives. There is hardly any country or civilization, society or family in the world, where its members, either today or in the past, have highlighted the birth of a female child. The birth of a male child is an occasion of joyous celebrations in the male-dominated society since times immemorial. Our religious scriptures too have highlighted the birth of a male child called as *Putra* - the saviour of his parents

from a particular Hell, called '*Pum*' (according to the derivation made by *Panini* as already discussed).

In ancient times the family kept a complete record of the pregnancy period of a lady through certain crude measures. This is possible to day due to the fact that the health care facilities are available at every doorstep in the form of our Health Centers. Thousands of years ago when a simple medicine or even a watch for keeping the time record was not available, all these things were extremely difficult for a common man. But still the practice continued till date.

All relatives, neighbours, friends and well-wishers wait impatiently for the moment of the delivery. The pregnant lady is a very important member of the family during all this period. Special care for her good health is taken. Minor house-hold jobs which involved bodily movements are considered more suitable for the health of such a lady. She is served small amounts of highly nutritious food, juices and health-drinks during all this period. As the period of her pregnancy advances, she is not allowed to move out from her residence during odd hours. She is asked to remain indoors during lightening, thunder and eclipses (sun and moon). There is a superstitious belief that the pregnant lady must remain completely calm and motionless during the eclipse otherwise the newborn bears the mark of her action/s if done knowingly during the eclipse periods of her advanced pregnancy. In such a state of care and restrictions the final hour of delivery approaches. The lady is free from all the burden of excitement and care. This is really the hour of thoughtfulness for every body, whosoever he may be, remains with a bowed head before Him at this moment as every body considers it to be an hour of life and death for the pregnant lady. The whole family, relatives and neighbours, all assemble with concern and expectation. Every body is in a pensive mood praying that the Almighty may bestow a moment of

successful and easy delivery upon the lady. In the meantime the most concerned lady of the house orders an elderly member of the house to bring some seasmum and acacia arabica (*KA:nThgan*) duly sanctified by a saint or a seer. At the same time she asks a young girl or lady of the house to bring water in a cup after dipping the right toe of the husband of the pregnant lady in it and the lady in labour is asked to drink this water. The nurse or the mid-wife, present on the occasion, orders to bring a cup of salted tea with added cream. The lady is also asked to keep the end point of her hair plait in her mouth so that she could take long breaths. All these actions are supposed to stimulate the process of delivery. The labour room is all filled with ladies, old and young, everybody consoling the patient to have courage. At this hour of trial, promises for offerings to gods and presenting oneself at a number of holy places and at the shrines of great seers and saints, is made for the safe delivery of the child. In the mean time, a sweet cry of a baby, strikes the ears of those present in the labor-room. All the family members feel relief and the members of the family start coming out and going in, in utter joy and pleasure, every body asking one another, 'is it a male or a female child'? There is no sign of anxiety on anybody's face. This hustles and bustle remains just for some time and every body prays for the long life and prosperity of the new born. Every body is happy that the lady and the new-born, whether it is a male or a female child, both have survived. The ladies of the house offer good wishes '*Vadlv*' (greetings) to each other. The word 'V*adlv*' appears to be a derivation from the Sanskrit root word '*Vid*' meaning 'to know'.

With the coming of the new born, whether male or female, the whole family including all cousins (from the father's side) excluding daughters and the sons who are without the Holy Thread Ceremony, commonly known as the *Yagnyopavita*, including the daughter/s-in- law and the lady concerned, are all considered impure for a period

of ten days from the date of the delivery, known as '*Hontsh*.' The scriptures say that even the married and the un-married girls of the family have this impurity for a period of three days. This conception is in vogue even now. The scriptures have further elucidated that in the case of two impurities (due to the birth of two children in the same *Gotra*/family) occur one after the other, only the first '*Hontsh*' or the one preceding the other be taken into account. But in case the second event is the death of a person in that family, the latter should be taken into consideration. The word '*Hontsh*' appears a derivation from the Sanskrit word '*Ashouch*', meaning impurity due to the death or birth in a family. It is the word '*Shouch*' with '*A*' as prefix. '*Shouch*' means cleanliness or purity and due to the prefix '*A*' the meaning is reversed and it means unclean or impure. It is of two kinds according to our *Dharama Shastra*, i.e., the '*Zyanl Hontsh*' called as '*Sutak*' in case the birth of a baby takes place in the family. It is called the '*Maran Hontsh.*'or '*Mritak*' in case of the death of a person in the family. No outsider can take cooked food or any drinks prepared or touched by any of the so-called impure persons of the family during the first ten days after any of the two events take place in a family. If any body takes it due to negligence or by mistake, he too is considered impure for a period of ten days from the date of his taking such food/drinks. All religious rites and ceremonies other than those connected with the delivery/birth of the child or the death rites of the deceased, are completely forbidden to be performed by the members of the family during all these days. The said impurity ends on the eve of the eleventh day after taking '*Pancha Gavya*' - a mixture of five elements like water, milk, curd, ghee and a few drops of a calf's urine duly sanctified by the *Kula Guru* according to the scriptures.

Three superstitions are closely connected with the time of the labour and the delivery of a pregnant lady:-

1 Entering of any other pregnant lady into the labour-room is considered ominous till the baby is born. In case such a lady enters the room knowingly, her own labour-time is believed to becomes more difficult and painful.

2 A married lady, without any child, considers it auspicious to enter into the labour-room. It is believed that by doing so the chances of her conceiving a child increase.

3. Prior to the onset of the labour, the pregnant lady is forbidden to lock any room/s, boxes/trunks with her own hands. In case she has done so, she herself or any member of the family is asked to unlock them. It is believed that locking of rooms, etc., make labour period more painful and lengthy.

In the meantime the attendance in the house increases. People come and congratulate the family members saying, 'God has saved the life of the two.' In case the newborn is a male, he is said to resemble Lord Krishna while others compare his or her limbs and facial structure with his/her parents. Some others pray for his/her good future and longevity. In the case of a girl child, the attendants say that the child is as beautiful as a gem. They further declare that the hair of the baby is so long and dense, as if the mother has been spinning wool on the wheel all-through her pregnancy. In the middest of all such conversations, an elderly lady of the house enters the room with a fire-pot (*Ka:ngIr*) filled with live charcoals and starts burning '*Niger*' (commonly known as '*Isband*') after touching the fore-head of each person with just a few seeds of '*Niger*' with the finger tips of her right-hand and then throwing it into the fire-pot. Just then the elder daughter or the daughter-in-law of the house asks the head of the family to please the mid-wife or the nurse by giving her a good monitory reward in

token of gratitude for the service rendered by her on the occasion. It is after receiving the said gratifications that the mid-wife or the nurse cuts the umbilical chord of the child otherwise she keeps them all waiting. This is the most precious time for the nurse to extract more gratifications in the form of cash and kind from the members of the family. The head of the family does not want to be cursed by the nurse at this hour of joy so he rewards her handsomely. After separating the 'naval string' she washes the baby with hot water and wraps it in a clean and new cloth, preferably a white shawl/towel and shows it to all others to extracts some more money from the family members. A representative from the maternal side of the child comes with presents like sweets, cakes/biscuits and a new dress for their daughter and the new born and other presents including some cash, known as '*Pya:v*'. The other members of the family and the relatives give presents in cash that is later on reciprocated. This is also the appropriate time when the elder member or the head of the family is asked to recite the holy words, the '*Gayatri Mantra*', into the right ear of the baby. Here a tentative family name is given to the baby, which is either retained or changed by the family priest (*Kula Guru*) after he prepares the horoscope of the baby. Needless to say that the name given to the baby should corroborate with the position of stars at the time of its birth. The baby is returned to the mother so that she can suckle her child. The elderly lady of the house asks the head of the family to note the correct time of the baby's birth for casting his/her horoscope, etc.

In ancient times, special care was taken to collect very soft parts of the paddy-grass, commonly known as the '*Go>DI Guyun*' much before the delivery of the child. It was carefully preserved for preparing the temporary bed for the first ten days after the delivery, as the mother was considered impure for ten days of her post delivery period. Hence, to save the household bedding from

getting defiled, the patient and the child were kept on this grass-bed after making a lining with mud plaster and lime powder in a circular form around it. At the lower end of the grass-bed was kept a new earthen pot called, '*Huri' Le'ji'* to the right side of the patient. It was also known as the '*Huri' Ra:zI'*. The said lining was pasted a fresh every morning with clay and water and pasted with lime powder. A portion of rice/vegetable/ meat prepared for the mother was first put into this pot along with a glass of fresh water. It was a superstitious belief that the pot, thus kept, was considered as the bodyguard of the lady during her post delivery days and keeping it well fed, would keep the mother and the baby satisfied. It was also believed that keeping the '*Huri' Ra:zI'* satisfied, the baby would feel contented, otherwise it would keep weeping and wailing in spite of the best care taken. The pot was kept at the right lower end side of the grass-bed of the mother for all the ten days. On the, eleventh day, after it was served its due portion of the '*Shra:n So>ndar'* feasting, the pot and the temporary grass-bed was gathered up in the evening, and thrown away at a solitary place, generally known as the '*Huri' Kho>d'*.

We generally believe that the impurity invites evil spirits. A lady is considered impure for all the ten days of her post delivery period and it is thought that the evil spirits arrive to tease the lady and the baby. In order to please these spirits, to gain their good will and to keep them away from doing any harm to the mother and the child, the circular space outside the grass-bed of the mother was plastered and lined with lime powder daily. It was a practice that presumably kept away the evil spirits from the mother and the baby. Hence rice and other eatables prepared for the mother were first served to it so as to please the evil spirits. It is also a belief that the evil spirits keep away from all those places that are guarded by some weapons. It is because of this that an iron sickle

or a knife is kept under the pillow of the new mother to keep away such spirits.

All the above mentioned social customs and ceremonies clearly denote a notion of alacrity expressed by our society on the birth of a child and the religious rituals make them more comprehensive and special as far our social structure is concerned. In our present changed social set up, the religious rites connected with these functions are postponed till the '*Yagnyopavita*' ceremony and are not generally held at the right occasion.

With the advent of the modern medical facilities, a pregnant lady is now immediately shifted to a hospital or to a Nursing Home for the safety of the child and the mother. This has changed the age-old practices of the family not only in the urban areas but also in the remote corners of our country. Now the delivery takes place on hospital beds and, hence the superstitions have vanished and instead modern and scientific thoughts have replaced the old beliefs. We have got special and splendid beds even in our middle class families now. Hence, the delivery of a child on the grass bed '*Hur*' is now not in vogue with the result that all the old superstitions connected with the said '*Huri*' *Ra:zI*' have since gone out of our minds and memories. No doubt, we have retained only a sweet memory of all our past praxis and beliefs till today.

2. '*Truy*' - The Third day's rituals.

After spending three days in her delivery bed made of pure and soft grass called '*Hur*', a special messenger is sent to the parents of the new mother, to inform them about the delivery of a child by their daughter. It is called '*a:nay*'. The person deputed for the purpose takes a present along with him, comprising white sesame fried in oil and milk, cream, and garnished with

kernels of walnuts, groundnuts, almonds, together with coconut, cashew nuts, cardamom, sugar-candy, dates, etc., and flavored with saffron. This preparation is called, *'Truy Tyal'*. Besides, offering it to all the relatives and neighbours etc., it is especially sent to the parents of the lady duly decorated in a tray and is also accompanied with five to eleven packets of sweetmeats, mostly, '*Barfi*', preferably packets of two kilogram each, according to ones economic and social status. The parents of the lady have to reciprocate the said '*a:nay*' in cash, according to ones status, with an addition to include the approximate amount spent on the said preparation. This repayment is called '*PurvIni*'. The word '*a:nay*' appears to be a distorted form of the Sanskrit word, '*Anayan*', meaning 'bringing' or 'intimating' and the word, '*PurvIn*i' seems to be the changed form of the Sanskrit word, '*Pu:rak*' meaning 'complementary, compensatory', or simply an 'addition'.

A light massage of oil or ghee is given to the hair of the baby in the evening, known as '*Truy Ti:l*'. It is believed that the hair of the child shall remain bright and shining throughout his/her life as a result of this massage done on the third auspicious day of its birth.

3. Shra: n So>ndar –
The Ritual and medicinal Bath.

After performing the '*Truy*' on the third/forth day, the health condition of the mother and the baby is checked by an elderly and expert lady of the house and, if all is well, the day for the first bath of the new mother and baby is fixed on the seventh, ninth or the eleventh day of the delivery. [1] In case both are hale and hearty, it could be done on the seventh day otherwise it is postponed so as

[1] The climatic conditions prevailing are also kept in view while fixing the date for the bath.

to suit the health conditions of the mother and the baby. Besides, it is performed on an auspicious day of the week, preferably on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. The religious functions connected with the '*Jatkarn*' or '*Kaha Ne'thIr*', purification of the mother and the child and the *Namkarn*' - giving a name to the child, are performed on this very day as the mother and the child is considered to get purified after the said bath. Sometimes both the functions are performed simultaneously on the eleventh or the twelfth day provided it is one of the auspicious days of the week mentioned above. The whole family is considered as impure, having '*Hontsh*' or '*Ashouch*' till this purification is done before the '*Agni*' while chanting the specific hymns from the scriptures. Offerings are made to the '*Agni*' on this occasion. In case it is not performed on the said dates/days, the function is to be performed invariably before the functions like, marriage, *Yagnyopavita* or the six-monthly *Shradha*', known as the '*ShaDmo>s*,' in case of the death of a family member takes place. This ceremony is generally performed on the day of '*Yagnyopavita*' ceremony now in case none of the said events takes place between the birth of the child and his Holy Thread Ceremony.

There are a number of folk-songs, tales and rituals connected with the '*Shra:n So>ndar*' celebrations. Once the day for the celebration is fixed, the mother and the child are given a medicinal bath with hot boiled water known as the '*Fo>ti' Wo<ni*', or the '*Losl Wo<ni*'. This water is boiled along with a number of herbs, known as the '*Fo>ti' Masa:lI*' and is then kept to cool down. In the mean time the grass bed of the mother is removed and kept aside. The place is properly besmeared with mud plaster. The earthen pot too is cleaned properly and half filled with fresh water. A good feast, generally non-vegetarian, that includes preparation of fish also, is arranged on the said occasion. The elderly ladies of the neighbour-hood and a few among the close relatives are

invited. The mother and the child are dressed in new clothes after the bath, which come from the mother's parental house. The two are seated on a fresh and clean bedding. An elderly lady of the house comes with a lighted earthen lamp, which is kept on a stand in the center of the room. A metal pot half filled with fresh and clean water is kept beside the lamp stand. The lady keeps a bunch of birch-bark in her left hand. A leaf of the bark is lighted on the lamp and then circulating it round three times over the head of the mother and the child, is thrown into the metal pot. The exercise is repeated over the heads of all the ladies and other family members (generally ladies) present in the room. The process is called, '*BurzI Me't KaDIni*'. The hostess, who performs this show, sings this folk-song on the occasion: -

Shokh tI po>nIsun ... Shokh tI po>nIsun
YAzman ba:y pAti' a:yi bro:nThi' a:yi,
SumI diwa:n kAdII diwa:n,
Vani' diwa: n Vari diwa:n,
DyakI bADi'nas bakhtI bAdi'nas,
Bab lAsi'nas bA:y lAsi'nas
Shokh tI po>nIsun, Shokh tI po>nIsun.

These lines are repeated for all those present at the function. The words '*De'd/Bab/TA:Th/To<Th, Ma:l/Mo<l/SA:b,*' etc., according to the age group of those present there instead of the words, '*YAzman Ba:y*', are inserted. Like *Ma:s De'd* (in case of mother's elder sister}, *Ma:s/TA:Th/To<Th* (in the case of mother's younger sisters/brothers-in-law, etc.), are added according to their seniority. In the case of the youngsters the words '*Ra:j/TA:Th,* like '*BA:yi' Ra:*j', *Beni TA:Th,* younger brother/ sister, is also added to this linage.

A general assessment of the very first line of the couplet hints to its very ancient origin when Sanskrit was probably the language of the common masses in the valley. The two Sanskrit words '*Shashwa*t' for '*Shokh*' and '*Punah su:t*i' for '*Po>nIsun*' meaning 'eternal' and

'pregnancy again,' respectively hint towards it. The meaning of this rhyme can be assessed as under: -

'Cheerfulness and once more a pregnancy,
The lady (managed all) going hither and thither,
By making bridges, (contacts) big and small,
Searching and offering hotchpotch,
Let her husband live long,
Let her prosperity be manifold,
Let her father live long,
Let her brothers live long ......

The rhyme also shows the busy time schedule of the lady who has been looking after all big and small things during the period of pregnancy in her family. Besides, it also includes good wishes for the other members of the family.

In the meantime seven big plates, known as '*Tha:l*', duly filled with cooked rice, meat, fish and a few vegetables including 'dandelion' '*Hand*', a wild vegetable considered very rich in iron content, are brought into the room. One, among these, is first served to the 'earthen pot', which is kept at the foot of the mother's bed to the right side for all these days. The second plate is served to the mother, who picks up a little rice and mixing it with a little of meat and vegetables touches the fore-head of the baby with it and keeps it to the right side of the baby, near his/her head/cap before she starts eating herself. The remaining plates are offered to the most near and dear relatives, generally the ladies. All those present including the neighbours and relatives invited on the occasion take part in this special feast and celebrate it.

On this day the parents of the mother come to the house of their daughter with a number of presents in a big decorated basket and this function is known as '*Pho>t tsa:nun*'. Now a days the presents are brought in a steel trunk which, besides a new set of clothes for the child and the mother, contains some candy-cakes, turmeric, some loaves of bread, walnuts, a packet of salt,

sugar candy and some money in cash. The person carrying this trunk is called '*KAni' MAhniv*', and he is allowed to enter the main door of the house after performing 'a:*lath*' (a ceremony in which a little water and a few grains of rice are kept in a plate and circulating it over the head of the man, carrying the trunk and the persons accompanying him. It is then thrown away). In return the man accompanying or the father of the girl has to pay some amount of cash for his entrance into his daughter's house, called '*a:lath*' This amount is returned to him in double at the time of his departure or after some days. The return money also includes the labour charges for carriage of the trunk, called '*MAhniv Ha:rI*'.

4. *Jatkarn - 'Kaha Ne'thIr',*
The birth rituals.

The literal meaning of the word, '*Jatkarn*' is 'Birth ritual', and in the common Kashmiri language it is called, '*Kaha Ne'thIr*'. Like all other rituals of the similar type, all the ingredients are required for making offerings to the Holy Fire. Besides, the baby is to wear round his/her neck a golden/silver ring attached with a *NA:rivan*, duly sanctified by the *Kula Guru* and the host by making offerings of the condiments and *ghee* to the Holy Fire. While chanting hymns from the *Vedas*, half of the offering of *ghee* is offered to the holy fire while half of it is cast on the ring placed in a bowl.. The offerings are repeated several times. After completing the ritual, the ring soaked in *ghee* is touched to the lips of the baby. It is then washed and put back in the same bowl for further benedictions during the '*Namkarn Sanskar*'. The *ghee* left in the bowl is to be rubbed gently on the head of the baby for a couple of days in the evening. It is a conception that rubbing the ritual-residue of *ghee* develops the brain and the hair of the baby. The *Vedic Richas* of this ritual

contain good wishes for the longevity of the baby and his/her parents [1]

The *Kula Guru* next sprays the duly sanctified water over the mother and the baby. In the midst of the chanting from the *Vedas*, the mother is wished that she may have sufficient and tasteful milk in her breasts so as to breast-feed her baby for a sufficient period of time. Thus seven offerings are made to the fire in this behalf [2] where after the parents embrace the child and give it nine benedictions putting their right hand on the head of the baby. These are :-

Oh my child, (here the name given to him/her on its birth along with the *Gotra* is recited along with his/her parentage}, you may:-

'1. Live long, 2. Attain your full age, 3. Prove to be truthful, 4. Attain prosperity, 5. Be full of valour, 6. accomplish fame, 7. Feed all the deserving, 8. Keep complete austerity (*Brahamcharya Dharma*), and 9. Live for a period of one hundred autumns'.

It may be re-called that the impurity on account of the '*Su:tak*' continues in the whole family and that no further religious rites of whatsoever could be completed unless accomplishment of this rite. The *Namkarn* ritual follows immediately during which further offerings are made to the Holy Fire after which the ring is tied to the neck of the baby. The folk songs of both the rituals are of the same nature as we shall see in the fore-going chapters.

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1 *Agnerayurusita Hiraryana Mukha Myadhyam Kritah,* Bhatt Pt. Keshav, *Mekhala Pustak.* 1925, P. 42.

2 *Saftabhirajyam Stanow cha Payiyeth Pita,* Bhatt Pt. Keshav, *Mekhala Pustak,* 1925, P. 43

5. *Namkarn-*
Giving a Name to the New-born.

This is purely a ceremony connected with giving a name to the new-born. At the time of uttering the '*Gayatri Mantra*' into the right ear of the baby, consultations are held between the members of the family/relatives present there, to decide upon a suitable name to the new-born, which is finally decided by the elders and lastly confirmed or even changed by the family priest after he casts the horoscope of the baby. The name of the baby should corroborate with the position of the 'stars' in the heavens at the time of his/her birth. The baby and his/her parents are brought before the Sacred Fire and after sprinkling Sacred Water on the trio; offerings are made to the fire amidst chanting of hymns from the Holy Scriptures. This portion of the function is of negligible importance now and the society has given it up. This religious and ritualistic portion of the post-birth ceremony, which the society seems to have considered as an effete practice and which is now performed on the eve of the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony, is a complete deviation from the set procedure.

The following extract from a folk song gives us a vivid picture of the period of pregnancy and the celebrations, which it involves: -

A:Th ryath gAyi path kun a:da:,
NAvimi ry>tI za:v Shehza:da:,
Huri bi:Th tay muri ro>Tnaye'
Ko<r kunIye pherIni dra:v.
MA:li' sombrinas JyotIshi' tI PAnDith,
Ra:zI po>tras Za:tukh gAnDiv,
Ra:zI po>tras chu Ra:j karunye'
Ko<r kunye' pherIni dra:v.

The translation of these lines is as under: -

When eight months had already passed,

The Prince was born in the ninth month.
She sat on the maternity bed and took the child in her lap.
Where has he gone just for strolling?
His father invited astrologers and Pandits.
(And asked them) to prepare the horoscope for the born Prince,
The Prince has to enjoy the kingship.
Where has he gone just for a stroll?

6. *Nishkraman/ Ma:sI Ne'thIr* – Rituals on the expiry of one month.

The literal meaning of the words '*Ma:sI*' and '*Ne'thIr*' is 'month' and '*Nakshetra*' or constellation, respectively. At the expiry of a month and after examining the health condition of the baby and the mother, this ritual is celebrated on any of the auspicious days, as already mentioned. In the morning, after bathing and dressing the baby, a circular diagram known as '*Vyu:g*' is cast at the main entrance of the house, commonly known as the, '*Vuz*,' with the help of different coloured lime powder. The baby is wrapped in a clean towel, and is kept on it beside a stone pestle placed on a round grass ring, '*A:r*', especially made for it. An elderly lady of the house arranges all this and in case the baby is a male one, pointing towards the pestle she says, 'Here is your bride.' In case of a female child, she would say, 'Here is your groom'. This ritual is also known as, '*Siryi Darshan*' and the mother of the baby is asked to step out of the house for the first time after the delivery so that she may be at liberty to move out of the house any time even if it is not one among the auspicious days. Hence the ritual is called '*Nishkraman*' meaning 'going out'. A little sugar is given to the new mother outside the house as a good omen. Salted yellow rice, commonly known as '*TAhAr*,' is prepared on the occasion and after offering a small portion of it to the deities and birds a little is kept

near the pillow of the baby and the remaining portion is served to the members of the family.

It appears that the age-old precedence of celebrating the ritual after an expiry of one month had been on the re-occurrence of the same *'Nakshetra'* when the baby was born. The social custom of pestle; and *'Vyu:g'*, has changed the nomenclature of the word *'Nakshetra'*, into *'Ne'ther'*.

There are some references in our folklore and folk songs, which show that the birth of a child was celebrated for full one year from the date of his/her birth and the whole family observed the rituals and customs connected with these celebrations. Let us examine some lines of the folk-song relating the *'Ma: sI Ne'thIr'* of a child: -

Ma:sI Ne'thIras sivimay karI kanI khA:li:,
SA:risIy Shahras bA:garIni dra:y.
Pra:ske'n dya:ran KanIwA:li' gArimay
Ko>rmay Barkho>rda:rIy na:v.

Translation:

I got boiled the beans and the kernel on your attaining one-month's age,
And I distributed it to the whole city.
Earrings were made for you from the presents made on your feast,
And I named you as my son.

7. *Tsatji:him Shra:n :* Fortieth-day bath.

On or before the fortieth day, the baby and the mother is again given a bath with hot herbal water on an auspicious day of the week, Now the lady is considered to be completely fit for doing all the house-hold chores or attend to her duties in or outside the house, as the case may be. It needs to be mentioned here that during all these forty days utmost care is taken of the baby and the mother. She is not permitted to walk with bare feet. She is not allowed to wash or bathe with cold water. She has

to take a boiled herbal concoction, called '*Losl Shurbath*' before morning tea or breakfast is served to her. Water meant for her drinking is thoroughly boiled and is known as '*Foti Wo<ni*' The pot containing the water is kept wrapped in woolen cloth so that it remains hot and un affected by outer atmospheric cold. Every care is taken about her eating and drinking all these days. She cannot eat anything, which is not fresh. Preferably, outsiders are not allowed to enter her room during odd hours. In case the entry is essential, the person has to keep his/her hand on the head of the mother/baby and then sit at the place of his/her choice. All this is done to avoid the entrance of evil spirits, who are thought to be accompanying such late travelers. It is a superstitious belief that such spirits harm the mother and the baby.

In the family set-up of the Kashmiri Pandits, there is hardly any evidence to show that there is any mass cultural or social celebrations held on the birth of a child, either male or female even in a collective manner. There is, however, evidence of folklore, folksongs and folkdances, etc., prevalent within the concerned family bounds on many other such occasions. In the *Atherva Veda*, there is a complete hymn that clearly describes very soothing methods involving less labour pain during the birth of a child [1]. In the Valmiki *Ramayana*, there is a reference of singing and dancing by the deities and angels on the birth of Lord Rama [2]. The poets of the Kashmiri language have adopted and incorporated the same ideas and descriptions in their Kashmiri versions [3] of the *Ramayana*. *Kalidasa* has also given an account of rejoicing in the "*Raghuvamsha*" on the eve of the birth of Prince '*Aja* [4].' It narrates that a congregation was held in

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[1] *Atherva Veda*, I - 11

[2] *Valmiki Ramayana* (*Bal Kanda*) 17-18

[3] *Rama Avatara Charita* by Prakash Ram Kurigami, Trans. By Dr. Shiban Raina, 1975 (*Bal Kanda*) XX, 7-8, P. 17-18.

[4] *Raghuvamsha* by Kalidasa, 3-19

the palace and singers and dancers were invited to put up their show on the occasion. It appears that the later Indian poets like *Tulsidas* and *Surdas* have repeated what *Valmiki* and *Vyas* have described about this ritual in the '*Bal Kanda*' of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*', respectively.

All these facts show that the birth of a child in a family was a matter of great rejoicing and merrymaking for the whole family. Social and cultural celebrations were held throughout the Indian continent on such an occasion and Kashmir could not have remained untouched by such practices. But presently no such celebrations take place in our society. It appears that with the passage of time all these celebrations have been forgotten by our society and are now restricted to a few ostentatious functions only.

No doubt, the folk-songs, sayings, etc., which generally form a part of our '*VanIvun*' *(BaTI VanIvun)* on the eve of *Yagnyopavita* ceremony, clearly tell us that there must have been some social and cultural celebrations observed in the Kashmiri society on the birth of a child.

The changes in the socio-religious and cultural patterns must have affected all such customs and finally the society must have given up all of them, though gradually. Pressure from a different civilization must have put a stop to the day-to-day celebrations and performance of religious rites for obvious reasons forcing the society to combine all these elements of rejoicing to one single function that is the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony. The same appears to be the fate of some of the rituals and customs which form a part of all the existing *Sanskars* out of which only a few have survived.

References to various festivities are evident in our folk songs (*VanIvun*) and folk tales, which clearly refer to the observance of such celebrations from time to time

during the period of maternity. Let us examine the lines of the following folk song : -

Vina:yaka tso<ram tI a:thwa:r dArmay
Ko>rmay Barkho>rda:rIy na:v,
A:Than re'tan kru:Th kya:h bo>rmay,
NAvimi rytI za:v Ba:lIgu:pa:l,
ThanA yAli pyoham tI ranI pe'v kArmay.
Ko>rmay Barkho>rda:rIy na:v,
Truyis tre' trakh te'l kya:h ko>rmay -
DandI gu:gi sA:ri: masa:lI kya:h kAri'may ......
NA:li kiti rangI rangI vastIr karimay ......
Zitishan ta PAnDitan sa:l kya:h ko>rmay ...
Ko>rmay......,

'*Vinayak*' is one of the names given to '*Ganesha*' - the propeller of all our actions according to the Hindu mythology. When combined with months, dates and days, it means the bright fortnight of *Bhadrapad*, i.e. September. The fourth day of *Bhadra Shukl*, is known as '*Vina:yak Tso<ram*. In case it falls on a Sunday, it is considered extremely auspicious. In the Kashmiri families, a special kind of sweet bread fried in ghee, called '*RoTh*', is prepared on this date. In case it is not possible for a family to adhere to this date, the preparation is postponed and held on some other auspicious day of the same fortnight or on the fifteenth bright fortnight of *Ka:rtika Shukl*, i.e. Oct. Nov. The function is known as '*Pan Dyun*'. Besides, September is the season of harvesting cotton in the valley, a raw thread got spun or prepared by an un-married girl out of newly harvested cotton, has got a special significance on this function. The girl gets a special sweet bread, called '*KanikI Vo>r*' and some little money, as a reward for preparing the thread. Needless to say that the cultivation of cotton has disappeared from the valley since long due to the preference for some other cash crops, but the ritual survives to this day even after our exodus from the valley.

From the study of the folk-song mentioned above, it appears that this date, day and fortnight, had a special significance of celebrations on the birth of a child in a family. A possible transliteration of these lines could be as under; -

(I) Kept a fast on Sunday, the fourth day of the bright half of *Bhadrapad*,
And I named you as my son,
(I) had a trying time for all the eight months,
And in the ninth month (I) gave birth to the Handsome one (*Krishna*),
(I) arranged a good feasting on your birth,
And (I) named you as my son,
On your '*Truy*'-Third day (I) got prepared three *Trakhs* (fifteen Kilograms approximately) of sesame,
(And I arranged) milk, kernel and all condiments
An d (I) named you as my son,
(I) got colourful clothes for you to wear and
(I) arranged a feast and invited all *Pandits* and astrologers.
And (I) ......

8. *AnI Pra:shun/Pre'pyun* – Serving of solid food for the first time.

This ritual of socio–religious importance is celebrated when the baby is nearly six months old. A vegetarian feast is generally arranged on this day. A special dish commonly known as '*Khi:r*' (thoroughly boiled mixture of rice, milk, sugar and garnished with almond kernels, coconut, dates, etc.) is prepared on this day. The baby is neatly dressed. Besides, new suits for the baby and the mother, a big plate (*Tha:li*) and a cup, saucer, a spoon and a tumbler preferably made of silver come from the maternal house of the baby. This serves as a gift to the child from his/her maternal grand parents.

There is a clear mention in the scriptures regarding this *Sanakar*. The scriptures direct that this function should be celebrated either when the baby is six month's old or has started cutting its milk teeth. Sweet rice–pudding *(Khi:r)*, Ghee and other dry fruit are offered to the *Agni* while reciting the relevant hymns from the Holy Scriptures. A portion from the offered *Khi:r* is placed before the baby as a residue. Other things like, books, a pen, a writing slate/paper, a knife, etc. are kept just within the reach of the baby. In case the child's first catch is a pen or paper, it is believed that the baby will become a great man of letters. In case he/she catches the *Khi:r* first, it is said that the baby will be a common man more inclined to eating. In case, the baby's first choice is a knife, it is presumed that it would become a great warrior, a technician or a doctor, etc. The following extract from the scriptures clearly hint towards this fact: -

'*Devaagrato atha vinyasya shilpa bhandani sarvashah,*
Astrani sarva shastrani tatah pashyet lakshnam,
Prathamam yat mrajyat balah tato bandam swayam tada,
Jeevatam tasya balasya tenaiva tu bhavishyati'.[1]

The translation of this couplet is as under: -

Keep on all the sides of the baby different kinds of utensils,
Different weapons and armaments to see the liking of the child,
The first thing, which the baby touches of its own,
Should be considered the main source of lively-hood in its life.

The ritualistic portions of the celebrations on this occasion have completely vanished from our society now. The socio-economic aspect is still prevalent involving giving of a few petty gifts by the maternal side. This aspect too is now at the verge of extinction in a large section of our society. The ritualistic part of the *Sanskar*

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[1] Pandit, Keshav Bhatt, *Mekhala Pustak, 'Upayana'*, 1925, Ps. 55-56.

is now observed on the eve of '*Mekhala*' (the Holy Thread Ceremony), since it is one of the most important *Sanskars*. However, no such provision is left for a baby girl for completing this *Sanskar* if it is not celebrated at the proper time. Needless to say that the *Yagnyopavita Sanskar* is now restricted to the male children only.

There is a beautiful narration in one of our folk songs, which give a vivid description of this function. It reads as under: -

ShimA:sis ko>rmay AnI Pre'pyunIye',
Man do>das ko>rmay khir taya:r,
Kho<s, gila:s tI tha:l kyah go>rmay,
Ko>rmay barkho>rda:rIy na:v.

The translation of these lines is as under: -

(I) Celebrated your '*AnI Pra:shun*' for the first time when (you) were six months' old,
(I) got prepared the sweet dish (*Khi:r*) for one mound (36 Kg. approximately.) of milk,
(I) got prepared a cup (*Kho<s*),a tumbler (*Gila:s)* and a plate (*Tha:l*) for you,
And I named you as my son.

9. *Kan tso>mbIni - Karan Bedha* – Piercing of the ears.

This was a ritual of purely social nature celebrated during yester years. An experienced lady of the house or of the neighbor-hood was invited to pierce the ears when the baby was nearly six month old. Besides ears, the nose of the baby girl was also pierced. Piercing of ears was common among males as well as female babies. The parents had the mythical notion that this was a safeguard against any kind of witchcraft or natural calamities. There are references in our folk-tales to confirm this notion. The story of the lion and the man with the pierced ears point towards it The lion left the man from its clutches on seeing a cut in his ears and considered it a worthless-prey

as a meal for the king of the forests. The social gatherings on such occasions have now disappeared. The piercing of the ears of a male child has since been given up and only a girl child's ears and nose etc., are pierced now by a trained doctor in a hospital and with out any celebrations.

10. Vo>har Vvo<d - **Birthday Celebrations.**

This function of socio- cultural importance held in addition to the *Sanskars*, is celebrated with pomp and show when the baby is one year old (according to the lunar calendar). A new dress is got prepared for the baby on the occasion. All the close relatives are invited to a feast and the whole family and the invitees hold celebrations. The mother and the child get a new set of clothes from mother's parents which include a set of '*ATIho>r*' for the mother (a tassel-like swinging set of ear ornaments made of tinsel thread called, "*Kala:bot*" either of gold or silver colour). Some affluent families get it made of solid silver or gold or is designed from its thread. It forms a part of the '*Dejho>r*' – a swinging ear ornament especially worn by Kashmiri girls on their marriage.

Besides, feasting, a special salty dish of rice made yellow with turmeric while cooking, called, '*TAhAr*', is prepared on the occasion. Some families prefer preparation of '*Khi:r*' (sweet milk and rice pudding) in case the birthday falls on the full moon day or the eighth bright half of a lunar month. A ritualistic prayer called the '*Pre'pyun*' is offered by the *Kula Guru* on this occasion. '*Pre'pyun*' appears to be a combination of two words, '*Para*' and '*Arpan*' meaning to give to others, to offer cr to present to others. It is a recitation from the Holy Scriptures which concludes with the sweet words, 'Please accept this "*Naived*"(the preparation thus made) like the "Nectar" which was procured by the gods in ancient times after churning the oceans '*Kshir Sagar*'. A

small portion of it, called *'tso'T'* is offered to the deities and birds, it is generally put on a temple wall or on the housetop. A small portion is kept as a mark of gratitude on the hearth or stove on which it has been cooked. The remaining portion is distributed among all those present in the house and those invited to attend the feast. It is known as *'NAvi:d'* or *Naived* - meaning the left-over of a ritualistic performance. Thus the dishes prepared on the occasion are first served to the relatives and neighbours and the remaining is taken by the members of the family known as *'Ho>tI shi:sh'* the 'left over.' This function is repeated on a year-to-year basis according to the lunar calendar.

On every birthday the family priest is invited to perform this ritual. Besides, offering a new '*Yagnyopavita*' to his host, (in case he has undergone this Sanaskar earlier), he ties a special coloured thread called *'NA:rivan'* to the right wrist of the host. It may be mentioned here that *'NA:rivan'* is tied to the left wrist of married ladies. The word appears a direct derivation from the root Sanskrit word *'Nadi Bandhn'* meaning 'wrist knot.' Besides its religious sanction, the modern science has accepted the importance of such a knot. It is considered useful for the ailments of heart and blood pressure, etc. The *'NA:rivan'*, with the duly sanctified Holy Water sprinkled on it by the *Kula Guru* after chanting hymns from the scriptures, contains seven knots that represent the seven mythological luminaries of valour and wisdom of the ancient Indian mythology who, it is believed, have been granted immortality by the gods. They are:-

1. *Ashwathama* The great hero of the *Mahabharata*, son of *Dronacharya,* whom *Drishtadyuman* killed treacherously.
2. *Bali*: The famous Rakshas *Raja*, the great grand son of *Bhakt Prehlad.* He had conquered the three worlds with his penance and was

betrayed by Lord *Vishnu* in the guise of a dwarf old *Brahman* by measuring all the three worlds by taking only three steps.

3 *Vyas* The great Rishi mentioned in the *Puranas* who is also considered as the first teacher and the writer of the great Epic the *Mahabharata.*

4. *Hanuman* The '*Hanuman*' of the great Epic *Ramayana.*

5. *Kripachary* The teacher of the '*Pandavas*' and the *Kauravas*'.

6. *Markanday* He is considered as the writer of the '*Markanday Puran*' He attained perpetual life due to his penance.

7. *Parshuram* The son of *Jamad Agni*, the great Rishi, considered to be a staunch opponent of the *Kshetriyas*, who is said to have framed the *Karma Kand*- the book of religious rites. *Parshuram* is reported to have extirpated the *Kshatriyas* from the whole world 21 times.

The '*Yagnyopavita*' of an unmarried boy consists of only three strings whereas it consists of six strings in case of a married man. It is believed that according to the *Dharma Shastra*, the father casts the three strings of it to the boy whereas he wears the remaining three strings as a result of his marriage with the girl with whom he is to share everything in life.

Now due to the impact of the Western civilization, the cutting of '*the cake* 'ceremony is held in the afternoon on the birthday. Some families celebrate the 'Birth day' ceremony according to the Christian calendar also.

There is a reference of celebrating this festival in our folk songs as well. The narration is as follows:-

VA: rshini Go>bro cha: v kya:h bo>rmay'
Bandan tI Ba:ndawan ko>rmay sa:l,
Naren kitsI so>nI sInz GunsI ju:ri gArmay,
Ko>rmay Barkho>rda:rIy na:v.s

The translation of these lines is as under:-

Oh; my one year old son, how eagerly (I) celebrated
And arranged a feast for all relatives and well-wishers,
(I) Got prepared a set of gold bangles for you,
And I named you as my son.

11. *ZarI Ka:say, Mundan or ChuDakar*– The first tonsure of the baby.

This ceremony is especially celebrated in respect of a male child only when he is three years old or even before that. The scriptures clearly mention that: -

'Triteeyasya varshasya bhuyishtyashu gateshu chudah karayati, Dakhinta kaputa Vashisthanam, ubhayate Atri Kashpayanam, Munda Braguwah, pancha chooda Angirasanam, Vajinah eka mangalartham Shikhino anyatha yatha kula Dharma va, Shuddha pakshasya punyahe, parvani va yathoktam upasamadhaya.

(Bhrigu Samhita [1])

The literal meaning of these lines is as under: -

'When the baby attains the age of three years, he is shaved or ton shored'. Then follow the directions for the mode of shaving the hair of the babies of different '*Gotras*' or clans, like *VasisThas*, *Atris, Kashyapas, Ba:rgavas, Angerasas*, etc. The *Samhita* has further elucidated and kept the mode of shaving open for all according to their traditions while following their individual religious ceremonies and rites. Closing the chapter, the Rishi has laid stress on the month, preferably the auspicious/bright (free from other ominous impacts), fortnight, day and date for holding such ceremonies as contained in the scriptures.

After making the offerings comprising sesame, barley, coconut, dates and sugar candy, and ghee etc., to

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[1] Bhatt. Pandit Keshav, *Mekhala Pustak*, '*Upayana*.' 1925, P. 56.

the Sacred Fire, the *'ChuDakar'* – 'the ritualistic hair cutting of the baby', is done by the family priest with the help of '*Darbha', Kusna*[1], a sacred grass considered holy and used in all religious rites. For this purpose two earthen saucers known as, *Tok/TA:ki'*, one containing water required for hair cutting and the other containing four walnuts, known as the '*ZarI Du:ni'* are made use of on the occasion. The hair of the baby is kept in this earthen saucer along with the walnuts and afterwards these are sown or buried at a sacred place of pilgrimage or in ones own garden/ orchard/courtyard etc., along with the hair of the baby. The idea behind sowing of the walnuts along with the hair of the baby is lest these are misused because the hair of a person is considered as a very important ingredient in different practices of witchcraft. So to avoid this, the hair of the baby is buried. The family barber is given a good remuneration in the form of a piece of cloth called '*Lu:ngi'* used for hair cutting, a packet of salt, a full plate of rice or more, a few walnuts and some money in cash - say Rs. 101/- and onwards. Some prosperous families give a suit of clothing to the barber as a present on this happy occasion. A special dish called '*VAr*' and loaves of rice flour, are prepared on this occasion in case the ceremony is not combined with the '*Yagnyopavita*' function on which the '*VAr*' and the loaves of rice flour are prepared a day or more earlier, preferably on the eve of '*MA:nzira:th'* or '*Mahandi Rat'* - the night of 'Henna'. Besides this, a small cake of all spices mixed together; called '*VAr*' is also used. It is a mixture of all the spices kneaded with black kidney-bean flour called, '*Vari FAli*' and it is used as a vegetable dish. There are two types of preparing the special dish, '*VAr*'. One is vegetarian dish, which

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[1] The Kula Guru makes a ritualistic (nominal) hair cutting. The barber who is offered a good gratification for the purpose on this auspicious occasion does the actual hair cutting.

contains walnut kernels, rice, turmeric and other spices, oil, and salt, and the second is the non-vegetarian dish containing all the above said ingredients except the kernels. Meat, preferably the innards of a sheep or goat called '*Chichar*' form a part of this non-vegetarian dish. The dish is served along with rice-flour cakes to all those present on the occasion. It is also distributed to all the neighbours and relatives according to ones social contacts. Generally vegetarian feasting is arranged on the occasion and all relatives and neighbours are invited. Though this ceremony is repeated on the eve of '*Yagnyopavita*' function but it involves the ritualistic portions only as directed by the Holy Scriptures. It has already been mentioned that only the social gatherings are held on the occasion and the ritualistic portions are avoided at the time of celebrating the 'Tonsure' of a baby on its scheduled date.

Generally speaking, this is one of the most important celebrations after the birth of a baby. The Holy Scriptures call it '*ChuDakar/karan*' or '*Mundan*'. In India it is known as '*Mundan*' and in Kashmir we know it as '*ZarI Ka:say*' The word '*ZarI*' means the first hair of the baby and '*Ka:say*' means shaving. The '*Mundan*' of the baby is necessary from the point of view of his betterment, good health, beauty and longevity according to the scriptures. It is one of the oldest rituals of the Indian religious practice and was more assiduously followed during the *Vedic* period when a boy was first introduced to his '*Kula Guru*' for imparting education to him[1]. The '*Grahisutras*' and the '*Atharva Veda*' contains special directions for this ritual [2]. Our Epics, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and even Kalidasa's '*Raghu Vamsha*' contain a vivid description of this function. The Kashmiri poets like Krishan Joo Razdan and others, have described

[1] Panday Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar, Varanasi* 1960, p. 121
[2] Ibid, p. 123

this function more vividly while giving the Kashmiri version of the *Ramayana*.

It is a fact that with the advent of modern education, the practice of sending our children to the '*Guru Kuls*' for education has come to an end and the ritual has undergone a great change. The celebrations, which involve social and cultural gatherings, are still held with pomp and show but its ritualistic portion is now completed on the '*Yagnyopavita*' ceremony. No doubt, even to day some families stick to their ancient practices and insist on performing all the socio-religious functions as per schedule and worship Lord *Ganesha* and other deities in the presence of the Holy Fire, and make offerings to it as specified in the Holy Scriptures.

Though our folk songs, '*VanIvun*' contain references regarding this celebration, but there is no reference to any kind of dancing or singing on the occasion. A perusal of these songs clearly depict our links with our ancient mythology and include almost all those mythological names of places and acts with which every Indian is familiar. No doubt that some of the couplets of these folk songs contain references peculiar to Kashmir alone. These include cutting of the hair of the baby at the '*Sharika Pi:tha*', commonly known as the '*Di:vi: Angan*'. The hair cutting of Lord *Krishna* and the joy expressed by '*Vasudeva*'- the father of 'Lord *Krishna*, preparing the razor out of pure gold for the hair cutting of the baby etc. are the main features of the folk-song which starts with a conversation like this: -

Mas Ka:sn::k sanz yatu:thay,
MAnzi' hyatu:thay Parameshwar
KrishnIni ze'nay syun ron Ve'nay[1]
Krishnas ka:sav ze'nay mas
ZarI ka:soyo Di:vi: Angan,

[1] A kind of wild 'mint-like' shrub not used as vegetable. It is a very fragrant plant, hence used in the religious functions along with flowers.

Gari KarA:yo Me'khali sanz,
MA:li: Go>rIyo sonI sund khu:ruy,
Goran ko>ryo Chu:Da:ka:r,
VasIdi:van Go>rIyo sonI sund Khu:ruy,
Brahaspatan ko>ryo Chu:Da:ka:r,
SonI sIndis khu:ris Ashmi hund dastay,
AstA astA ma:li karus Chu:Da:ka:r,
Vo>stay ka:ro khu:r raTh wa:ray,
Baha: sheri ganDIyo sonI dasta:r,
Vo>stay ka:ro astI astI kuDusu:,
TshA:gis vursu: Mo>khtay ha:r,
Na:ra:n Juwas A:hi: mange',
Kanyak[1] *zange' anA:se',*
ZarI ka:snas kya:h kya:h paze'?
Nu:n VAr tay beyi MohrI pra:s,
NA:vid dapa:n kya:h karI to>mlas?
Me' gatshyam ShimlI ta KA:ni: Sha:l,
Vo>stI ka:r dapa:n kya:h karI vari hani ?
Lari travun chum tsu:rim por<e,
Vo>stI ka:r dapa:n kya:h karI da:nyas?
Me' gatshyam Ka:ni Ha:myuc JA:gi:r,
Vo>sta ka:r dapa:n kya:h karI Nu:nI hani,
Lari hani tra:vaha: Zo:nay Dab.
Yi ha: tsI mangIham ti: bo dimIyo,
Krishnas Tu:Thinam Na:ra:yan,
Divki: vo>nInay ti: bo dimIyo,
Mahara:zas rAchinam Na:ra:yan,
Ka:samay zarI tay tho>vmay tsho>guy,

[1] 'Before starting performance of any of the religious rites other than those connected with death, anniversaries, etc., an unmarried small girl is handed over a plate of rice containing a few walnuts/almonds, salt and some money on it. She touches the right shoulder of the person, performing the ceremony, thrice at the time of making a vermilion mark on his fore-head or at the time of his wearing a new Sacred Thread. This process is called 'Zang' It can be an occasion of wearing a new suit of clothing, marking a 'Tilak' on the fore-head at an auspicious religious functions or on any of the auspicious days of the year.

Bhawa:ni bo>guy so>zu:nay,
ZarI ka:sith dra:kh o>brI tall Siryo<.
Go>bur chukh VasIdi:v Ra:zo<nuy,
Lu:ngi' hye'th dimIyo khu:r bo darmas.
Brahman zanmas Namaska:r,
NA:vidas nishi a:kh isla:h kArithIy,
Vasu ya:rbal khas shra:n kArith,
Sara Pamposh Tu:ri' gaya ta:zay,
ZarI Mahara:zay lasi:nam.

The conversation starts with an obeisance to God and other deities and then follows some question and answers. The translation of these lines is as under: -
You started the hair cutting ceremony and in the mean time remembered the Almighty,
On the eve of Lord *Krishna*'s first hair cutting, the shrub '*Ve'na*' was got prepared as vegetable,
Let us cut your first hair at *Di:vi: Angan (Sharika Pi:tha)*
And make preparations for your *Yagnyopavita* at our home,
The father got prepared a golden Razor and the family priest completed the razor of your hair.
Vsudeva got prepared a golden Razor, and the Jupiter, Brahaspati completed your hair cutting
The golden razor has the handle made from precious stone,
Oh dear; please razor his hair very gently, oh; learned barber, handle the Razor carefully,
I shall manage a golden turban for you, oh barber; soften his hair very gently,
Encircle the Tonsure with a diamond necklace,
Ask a little girl to perform the beginning rite, '*Zang*',
What should be the reward for the first hair cutting?
Salt, a cake of spices and a good number of gems,
The barber says what shall I do to the rice?

I should get a good suiting and a '*Kani Shwa l*[1]'
The barber says what for do I require the cake of spices?
I want to construct the fourth storey of my house,
The barber says what for do I require this paddy?
I want the free hold Land Grant of *Kanihama*[2].
The barber says what shall I do to this little salt?
I want to construct a '*Zu:nI Dab*[3]' of my house,
What ever you ask for, I shall give you,
May God (*Narayana*) bless my (son) Lord *Krishna*?
I shall pay you what *Devaki* (*Krishna's* mother) promised,
May Lord *Narayana* bless my groom?[4]
I celebrated the first razor of your hair and kept your Tonsure
Goddess '*Bhawani*'[5] presented this to you.
On your first shaving, you sparkled like the sun coming out of the clouds,
You are the son of king *Vasudeva*
I shall donate the shaving cloth along with the razor
Salutations for your attaining the '*Brahmin janma*', 'twice born,'
You have just returned after shaving from the barber
You now return after taking a bath from the '*Ya:rIbal*'[6]
The lotus buds in the lake have become fresh
May my clean shaven bride (*MahAra:zI*), live long.

After the bathing, the boy pays his salutations and makes a few offerings to the Holy Fire while the priest

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[1] A special kind of Kashmiri shawl made of pure silk- yarn which passes through a ring. Also known as 'Ring Shawl'.

[2] Name of a village in the valley of Kashmir famous for bumper paddy crop.

[3] It is a kind of projection made of timber on the second/ third storey on the moon-lit side of the house.

[4].The boy at the time of *MunDan/Yagnyopavita*/Marriage, is named as a groom '*MAhra:zI.*'

[5] A name attributed to Mother Goddess as the spouse of Lord *Shiva*.

[6].A selected place at the bank of river/pond/lake/spring/rivulet specially meant for bathing/washing etc.

chants hymns from the scriptures. Thus the function comes to an end.

12. *MangatI Anun (Dattak)* - Adoption of a child

In case a couple is childless due to obvious reasons, they can adopt a son or a daughter of those who are in a position to do so. The main reasons for adoption are :-

(1) Medical.

In case any one or even both of the married couple are medically not in a position to produce a child, there is no option left with them but to adopt a child.

(2) A baby born on Mu:l, GanDa:nt Nakshetra (lunar mansions).

There are 27 *Nakshertas* (lunar mansions) of approximately 24 hours orbital durations each in the path of the moon which form a lunar month. The last 2 - 5 hours of '*Jishta*', '*Revati*' and '*Ashlisha*' *Nakshetras* form the GanD:ant. If a boy/girl is born within 1.12 hours at the beginning of the '*Ashwani*', 1.36 hours within the '*Magha*' 3.36 hours within the '*Mu:la*,' and at the concluding period of 4.58 hours of *Revati*, 4.24 hours of *Ashili:sha* and 2.24 hours of *Jishta Nakshetras*, he/she is considered as born on '*Mu:l GanDa:nt*' and the baby, if born during these periods, is considered inauspicious either for the parents or for the family and its prosperity and progress as a whole. There is a religious binding on the parents to give away such a baby in adoption. Though such a religious binding appears to be as a curse but if we ponder a little deeper into the idea behind such religious bindings, we can easily see that by doing so our religion has paved a way for our childless couples to get a chance for having a child in their otherwise dull and monotonous

family life. In this way this religious sanction is a blessing for giving a child for adoption to the childless, which on the one hand lessens the burden of the parents who do no wish to have more kids due to one reason or the other and on the other hand it bestows life and happiness on the childless.

(3) Birth of Twins.

In case a lady gives birth to two babies at a time called ("*Dukri*") and she or her family is not in a position to keep both the babies due to their extended families or health conditions of the mother, she or the father of the baby is in search of a person or the family who are in search of a baby for adoption. This is an adoption based on reciprocity.

Whatever may be the reason behind such adoptions, our society considers it an act of great blessing and importance. The giver of a baby is considered to have planted a shady tree in the courtyard of a barren family and thus satisfied the deep desire of a childless family.

Adoption of a child is an ancient custom in the Indian family set up. We have a number of such references in the epics and the *Puranas*. Previously, while adopting a baby, its '*Gotra*' was kept in view because it involved less rites and rituals. According to the *Dharama Shastra*, a person can adopt a child of his own '*Gotra*' or family even though he might have already gone through the Holy Thread Ceremony. A baby outside ones '*Gotra*' can also be adopted provided his *Yagnyopavita* ceremony has not already been preformed. The *Shastras* clearly restrict the adoption of a baby from the brother-in-law's side (the brother of the spouse). Both the families invite their nearest and experienced relatives after the date for the final give and take of the baby, is finalized. The person who adopts a baby brings some new suits of

clothing for the baby and even for his/her natural mother. Some people do not accept these gifts. The elderly people on both the sides complete the formalities of the function after oral promises and agreements. Now a days the adoption has been given a legal shape and requisite legal formalities are completed for such adoptions in a court of law.

As per the promises and agreements made on the occasion, not only the two families concerned but also two different dynasties come close to one another. But in the real life the position is quite opposite. The person who adopts a baby tries his utmost to maintain a distance from the person who offers him the child. By doing so he consoles his own self considering that more the distance, the less shall be the impact of his/her natural parents on the child and the less will be the risk of losing the affection of the baby. Thus by doing so they cut the bonds of attachment between the baby and his/her natural parents, lest he/she should desert them in the long run. The parents adopting such a baby complete all his/her *Sanskars* in their house and according to their own family traditions.

Chapter three

Yagnyopavita -The Holy Thread Ceremony
(Philosophical and Historical Perspective)

It is the most important religious binding on the parents to include their male child/children into the Brahamnical order which is known as, '*Yoni tra:vun*' in the Kashmiri language. Hence it is an occasion of great importance not only for the family but also for the whole dynasty including the relatives. Besides '*Yagnyopavita*', it is also known as '*Upanayan*' or '*Mekhala*'. The celebrations on the occasion consist of two fold, one related to its traditional/ philosophical aspect and the other to its religious/ ritualistic format. The word '*Yagnyopavita*' consists of two words, '*Yagnyo*' and '*Upavita*' both originating from the Sanskrit language meaning 'the Sacred Fire' and 'having come near' or 'having put on.' As for the word, '*Upanayan*', pronounced as '*Vo>pInayan*' in the Kashmiri language, is concerned, it also consists of two words, '*Upa*' and '*Nayana*' meaning 'going close to'. Besides, wearing the Sacred Thread round the neck, the word '*Mekhala*' means a special pattern of dress-code comprising a rope belt (of *Kusha*), the skin of a deer (for receiving alms known as *Abi:d*), a stick of *Plasha* or Mulberry tree for self protection and a cotton thread to tie round the waist known as '*A:Tipan.*'

As far its traditional/ philosophical aspect is concerned, it is an expression, an unshakable belief and faith in our ancient traditions, beliefs, rituals and customs which have proved to be the life-line of this great and continuing civilization of India. The tradition of the pupil-teacher relationship, considered as the pride of ancient Indian education, exists in a miniature form while performing this Sanskar. The tradition has been kept alive by our society by performing un-broken chain of rituals

performed on this occasion. This is because we have given due respect to our great Rishis who were adored as our '*Gurus*', preachers and as our ancient progenitors.

The word '*Guru*' means 'one who dispels the darkness'. It has been our ancient tradition to consider the *Guru* as the remover of pandemic cover of darkness and ignorance that exists in us and instead he gives us the light of knowledge. Knowledge of who we are, how to relate the Pure One with the material world. Most importantly to know is, how to transcend the worldly illusions and reach to the abode of the Infinite Blesses, which is our ultimate goal.

The '*Guru*' should dedicate himself to achieving human perfection through the study and assimilation of *Vedanta* and should live by its percepts so that he is able to conceive such thoughts and remit all these experiences to his future generations as his forefathers did for him. It is an acknowledgement of the importance of *Vedanta* in our lives. *Vedanta* makes us '*Rajarishis*'- kingly without and sagely within and without all that, our involvement with the materialistic world may not be possible,

The combination of the teacher's wisdom and the energy of the student make a vibrant and progressive society. It lays stress on the importance of the *Guru* in every walk of life. A sportsman's natural gift and skill acquire direction with the expertise of the coach. A musician's talent is honed by the dedication of his mentor. The same is the case with a person moving ahead on the spiritual path where the ignorance of the seeker's mind is removed by the enlightenment of his path by his *Guru*.

The teacher-student relationship is accorded paramount importance in the Indian culture. The *Guru* is considered as good as God Himself. Spiritual growth is impossible without the help of a *Guru* who is considered, '*Brahmavit*' and '*Brahmajana*' - established in the state of 'God Realization' and has the teaching skills to impart

the subtle spiritual concepts to his disciple. Though persons with such qualities and caliber are rare, yet India has been blessed with outstanding sages who have appeared in every generation to keep this unique tradition alive. It is to this singular endowment that we pay our tributes and, as a mark of gratitude, we offer ourselves as '*Guru Dakshina*' and pledge to continue the tradition for generations to come. Total surrender to the *Guru* is one of the foremost qualifications of the disciple. This does not imply blind following .The seeker must question, probe and analyze the truths taught so as to understand, absorb and transform his personality to achieve the higher realms of knowledge. In order to transcend this worldliness and reach the abode of Infinite Bliss, the most important and ultimate thing for a disciple is to have an attitude of service or '*Seva bhav*" unto all.

Maharshi Vyas has played a great role in the preservation of our *Vedanta* philosophy. He was the famous sage who codified the *Vedas*. *Vyasa Pi:Tha* is the seat from where any spiritual or *Vedic* teaching is imparted in acknowledgement of *Vyasa*'s immense contribution to *Vedic* learning. All great teachers bow to *Vyasa* before taking such a seat. He is revered as the first *Guru* although the *Guru-Shishya* tradition was established long before his time. According to the *Puranas*, *Vyasa* was the son of *Rishi Parasara* and his mother was a fisher-woman named, *Satyawati*, and he was the grandson of the great sage *Vasistha*. He personified the sagely wisdom of *Vasistha* and the practical approach of a fisherman. Wisdom and practical life are the two essential approaches to be cultivated so as to lead a successful life. He was born on the full moon night *Purnmashi*, (denoting illumination) of *Ashada* (the third month of the *Vikram* era) and we celebrate the day even today as '*Guru Purnima*'. *Vyasa* is considered to be an incarnation of Lord *Vishnu*. There were supposed to be twenty-eight such *Vyasas* of whom the one referred to above, is said to

be the last one. The saying is that we have been promised twenty-nine *Vyasas,* and the 29th *Vyasa* is yet to come. In addition to decoding the *Vedas*, *Vyasa* wrote the great Epic the '*Mahabharata*' consisting of nearly one-lakh verses. It is referred to as the fifth *Veda*. He is also reported to have composed the *Puranas* and the *Brahma Sutras*.

While summing up the philosophical aspects of '*Upanayan*' we shall come to its ritualistic observance. It is believed that in ancient times, the people of this sub-continent used to send their wards to the hermitages of the great *Rishis* and *Gurus* for refinement, embellishment, purification and for imparting to them the real and ever lasting values of character, personality, spirit and ethics. Such hermitages or schools were generally located in lonely and deep forest areas, faraway from the reach of the general public. Besides, there were a number of separate hermitages for different schools of thought, viz., *Veda, Vedanta, Vedangas, Dharam Shastra, Niti Shastra, Samaj Shastra, Artha Shastra, Vyakaran, Puran, Jyotish* Astrology, Astronomy, *Karma Kanda,* and other allied *Shastras*. The child, entering the hermitage, was handed over to the *Kula Guru/ Rishi* for being imparted the elementary education, known as '*Vidhyarambh*'. The initial education was considered essential for all those coming to the hermitage and admitted for the purpose. The first letter taught to the pupil was '*Om*'- the ultimate truth and the first lesson taught was '*Om Swasti Siddham*'- meaning 'let the Almighty bestow (me) with eternal wisdom.'

The introduction of elementary education was followed by the '*Yagnyopaveta*' ceremony. The word is a combination of two Sanskrit words, '*Yagnya*' and '*Upaveta*, meaning, 'the Holy Fire' and 'going close to'. Thus the meaning of the word is 'going close to the Sacred Fire', whose presence is felt everywhere and by

every one. Hence it is called '*Sakshat*' or '*Prateksha Deva*'. That is why; the sun has been named as the '*Prateshkha Deva*' in the Indian mythology and in the *Puranas*. It is a fact that the real essence of the ceremony has long been forgotten, but the impact of the function has been so impelling that nearly all the ten *Sanskars* which have to be held prior to this *Sanskar*, are now completed on the eve of the '*Mekhala Sanskar*'. In this way it has emerged in a magnanimous from known as '*Upanayan*'. The material element in the '*Upanayan*' ceremony is to invest the Sacred Thread or the *Yagnyopavita*[1].

In almost all the beliefs of the world, a baby is considered as pure as soul and without the impact of this or that religion. No body is born as a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jew or Zoroastrian. The truth is that every child is an offspring of a man and an element of humanity. The social customs and rituals of a particular society make him the follower of any of the said religions. Every society enrolls a baby into its fold by performing certain rituals and customs peculiar to it. Even the '*Stone Age*' man had some peculiar beliefs though he neither followed any religion nor had any set system of philosophy and belief. Even then he used to categorize the children after assessing their devotion to endurance and tolerance [2]. Some tribal people separate the girls of the tribe and keep them in separate confinements and give them special training according to the special needs of their tribe. Physical injury was caused on any of the limbs of a male child to assess his body strength and valour and thus accomplish the ritual [3]. Circumcision, ritual of a similar type is prevalent among the Muslims known as '*Khutna*' (*Khatan Ha:l*). The Christians have a ritual of a

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[1] Hastings, J. (Ed.) Mackichand, - Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, London, 1959 Vol. II. P. 407.

[2] Frazer,Golden Bugh - Children of Man, New York, 1959, II Ed., Vol. III P. 442

[3] Panday, Raj Bali, - *Hindu Sanskar,Varanasi*, 1960 p.144.

similar nature called '*Baptism*' and the Zoroastrians have an identical ritual called, '*Nava Jot.*' The '*Yagnyopativa*' of the Hindus appears to be a similar religious ritual [1].

The probable date of the beginning of the ritual of '*Mekhala*,' followed by the Hindus of the continent, cannot be determined with certainty. The Zoroastrians follow a ritual, that has some resemblance with our '*Yagnyopavita*' ceremony and thus, the scholars are of the view that the ritual must have been in currency before the scattering of the ancient Indo Aryans to the South-East-Asian countries. The ritual must have under-gone certain changes according to the socio-economic and cultural needs at the time of their interaction with the local populace. The weather of the places, the soil conditions and the environment too must have played its part in forcing such changes, but the ancient character of the ritual seems confirmed [2]. The word '*Brahmchari*' is often repeated in the *Vedas*, *Vedangas* and the *Upnishads*. In the *Atharva Veda* there is a description of a pupil initiated at the '*Vidyarambha*.' One of its verses (*Richas*) is attributed to such a pupil. In this verse we find all those roots of this ritual, which developed into its present shape during the era of '*Brahmanism* [3].'

The *Paraskar Grahi Sutra* is considered to be an encyclopedia of our religious rituals and rites. The ritual under review had assumed its present form till it reached the age of *Grahisutras*. It contains clear directions regarding the age groups of the boys of different castes for casting the '*Yagnyopavita*'. It says: -

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[1] Frazer, Golden Bugh, -Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. II., P. 407

[2] Pnaday, Raj Bali, - *Hindu Sanakar, Varanasi*, 1960 p.145.

[3] Ibid., P. 146.

Ashtamay Varsharshay Brahanam Upnayet gamashtamaiva. Ikadeshay Kshatriyam Dwadashay Vaisham[1]. '

'The ceremony should be performed in the eighth year and only in the eighth year for a *Brahmin*, in the eleventh year for a *Kshatriya* and in the twelfth year for a *Vaisha*'.

While making a total assessment of all the *Brahmin Granthas* and *Grahisutras*, Pt., Keshav Bhatt, a famous Sanskrit scholar of Kashmir, has written in one of his books, '*Mekhala Pustak*': -

Saftamay Varshay Brahmanasay Upayanam,
Navmay Rajanyasya, Ikadeshay Vaishasya,
Aa shodashat Brahmanasyat na-tikramah,
Dwavimshat Rajanyasya Chaturvimshat Vaishasya[2].

'The '*Upayan*' ceremony should be performed when a *Brahmin* boy is of seven years, a *Kshatriya* boy is of nine years and a *Vaisha* boy is of eleven years. Casting of the *Yagnyopavita* to such a *Brahamchari* is a clear deviation if a *Brahmin* boy crosses the age limit of sixteen years, or a *Kshatriya* boy completing the age of twenty-two years, and for a *Vaisha boy* after the age of twenty-four years.' This is a clear warning that the 'Sacred Thread Ceremony' should be held before the boys of different castes attain the above-mentioned age limits.

Yagnyopavita is commonly known as '*Yoni*' in the Kashmiri language. It appears a direct derivation from the Sanskrit word 'Yoni', meaning 'the origin wherefrom all the animates have originated and then developed in different sects'. It generally comprises three white threads measuring, approximately, one meter, made of three times folded thread and with a reverse knot at the center, known as the '*Brahama Gand*.' Each such string comprises three thin strings and all strings are twisted

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[1] *Paraskara Grahi Sutra*- II page 30.
[2] Pt., Keshav Bhatt, *Mekhala Pustak, Upayanam* 1925, p. 59

together, thus forming nine threads in all the three final strings knotted together. In general the total length of a *Yagnyopavita* is considered as ninety-six measures on the hand, known as '*Pa:wl* .'

The three strings of a *Yagnyopavita* reflect:-

(A) Tri Varga : The three stages/*Ashrams* of human life;

I. Brahamcharya Avastha/Ashram,

II. *Grahasth Ashram,* and

III *Va:nprasth Ashram.*

(B) Tri Rin: The three obligations of a man:

I Obligations towards the Devas,

II Obligations towards the *Rishis*/teachers; and

III Obligation towards the manes.

(C) Tri Varna: The three castes of the Indian society.

I *Brahmin,*

II *Kshatriya*, and

III *Vaisha.*

(D) Tri Loka : The three domains of this world

I. Bhu:. (Earth),

II. *Bhawah.* (Beyond the earth), and

III. *Swah.* (The Havens above).

(E) Tri Deva : The three forces of Nature,

I. *Brahma* - as the Creature,

II *Vishnu* - as the Preserver, and

III *Shiva* - as the Destroyer.

The life span of a man is considered to be of one hundred years subdivided into four parts of (1) *Bal/ Brahmcharya Awastha* (2) *Grahastha Ashram* , (family life.) (3) *Vanaprastha*, (detachment from family life), and (4) *Sannyas*, (total detachment from the world) and each span comprising twenty-five years. It is because of this fact that our holy scripture contains: -

Pasheema Shardah Shatam, and *Jeevema Shardah Shatam.*[1]

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[1] Pt., Keshov Bhat, *Mekhala Pustak, Upayanam* 1925, Ps. 63,71, 170

Meaning: 'Let my vision be perfect for a period of one hundred autumns and let me live for one hundred years.

(A) *Tri Varga* - The three stages of human life.

The days of adolescence are already over for a boy who has attained the age for wearing the Holy Thread. This stage called, *Brahamcharya Ashram* is very important for him and he has to perform complete celibacy till he is 25 years old. The scriptures lay emphasis on performing complete celibacy during all these years. It may be pointed out that this fact has been accepted by the modern science too. This stage is followed by the '*Grahasth*', '*Va:nprasth*' and the '*Sannyas*' *Ashrams* that we shall discuss separately.

(B) *Tri Rin* - The three obligations of a man.

A man is born with three obligations; 1) towards the *Devas, 2)* the *Rishis*/ teachers and 3) his fore- fathers, described as '*Tri- Rin*' in our scriptures. These are: -

i. *Deva Rin* - Obligations towards deities.

It is our firm belief that the wishes of *Devas* (gods), deities or some unknown natural forces are behind all our actions and thus these invite our attention. According to Indian ethos things like good weather, crops, rain, sunshine, etc. are all attributed to the wishes of our deities and *Devas* (gods). Therefore, man has developed some obligations towards all these deities and gods so as to please them.These are known as *Deva Rin*.

ii. *Rishi Rin*-Obligations towards our Rishis,

In ancient times there were no schools, colleges or Universities as we have today. There used to be great '*Gurukuls*' or hermitages in forests where different branches of knowledge were taught to students. Great seers and scholars who were considered authorities in their respective fields headed these *Ashrams*. The parents

would like to send their children to these *'Gurukuls'* as early as possible so that their wards could get the best of attention and education at appropriate time. These small children would return from the *Gurukula* after a few years as fully developed youths possessing knowledge and experiences of life. In this way these *Rishis* were doing laudable work of great importance for the society as a whole and the society too had an obligation to look after the day-to-day needs of these *Rishis*. Hence the *'Rishi Rin'* was one of the prominent obligations of all parents.

iii. Pitri Rin – *Obligations towards our fore-fathers.*

Lastly, man has an obligation towards his father, mother, grand father, grand mother and great grand fathers and mothers, (both maternal and paternal), likewise towards all those elderly persons who are or were related to him from his father/mother's side and are dead now. All these persons are worth our reverence and devotion. Our obligation towards them is called *'Pitri Rin'*. We complete these obligations, called *Pitri Rin* in our scriptures, by performing the *Shra:dha* ceremonies of all these manes

(C) *Tri-Varna* - Three castes of the society.

Only three castes of the Indian society i.e. *Brahmin,. Kshatriy,* and *Vaish* are entitled to the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony and that too with certain slight variations.

(D). *Tri-Loka* -The three domains of the universe.

According to the *Puranas* the whole universe around us, consists of three main parts i.e. '*Bhu*', the earth, '*Bhawah* ', the space, and '*Swah*', the Heavens, beyond.

(E). Tri Deva - Three forces of nature.

There are three stages involved in the life of what ever exists on this earth. Every-thing is first born and then it develops/grows and finally fades away or dies. The Indian mythology has entrusted these three powers to three deities named as, *Brahma, Vishnu* and *Mahesh*, also called as the 'Creator', the 'Preserver.' and the 'Destroyer'.

According to one more theory, *Yagnyopavita* must be completed when the boy is only four years old. That is why the thread of the *Yagnyopavita* is kept ninety-six hand measures known as '*Pa:wvI*' in Kashmiri language. The ninety six hand measures of the thread are considered the ninety six years of ones age and after adding the four years prior to the ceremony we get the total of one hundred years [1], the desired age for a man according to the scriptures.

The Hindus of the valley belong to one particular caste of high order *Brahmins* and, as such, the variations in the celebration of the ceremonies existing among other castes does not exist there. Kashmir being the most famous seat of learning in the whole of the sub-continent and even beyond it since the times immemorial, aspirants from far and near thronged to this place for learning and education. As *Yagnyopavita* is the first and foremost ritual for admitting such aspirants in a '*Gurukul*', the ceremony appears to have attained more prominence in the valley and was held in accordance with the established norms as contained in our scriptures [2]. This appears to be the main reason that the ritual attained supremacy over all other rituals connected with the *Sanskars* prevalent among the

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[1] Archarya Pandit Sh. Ramanand Ji Shastri, '*Yagnyopavita Aur Vaigyanik Rahasya*', *Kalyan Gorakhpur*, year 24 No: I. P. 613.

[2] '*Keys to Kashmir*', Lalla Rukh Publications, Srinagar, 1953, P. 77.

local people [1]. It is probably due to this very fact that the groom or the *Brahamchari,* as he is called, is asked to walk three steps towards the north when this function is held any where in the sub-continent,. As Kashmir is to the north of the sub-continent, the three steps towards north represent the movement of the boy towards the *Sha:rada: Pi:Tha* (Kashmir) while performing this ceremony. The walking of 'three steps' is now just held as a ritual.[2] We cannot, at the same time, ignore the fact that our *Acharyas* and *Rishis* performed the ritual in big hermitages. With the passage of time great changes took place in the whole of the Indian sub-continent. In order to keep the ancient sanctity of the ritual alive, the *Brahmachari* is now asked to walk three steps towards the north so as to keep the idea of his journey to towards the '*Gurukul*' fresh in his mind.

It is the most important duty of the parents or the elders in a Kashmiri family to perform this ritual and thus include their children in their clan or '*Gotra*' through '*Mekhal*'. Thus, it is presumed that this ritual makes them *Brahmins*. It may be pointed out that a person without '*Mekhal*' cannot perform any of the rituals connected with the 'three obligations' i.e. *Deva/ Rishi* or/ the *Pitri Kriya*. We may not perform the pre-birth or even post-birth rituals of a child, as already discussed, but we cannot avoid the *Mekhala* ceremony of our male child. There are some instances where some families have not been able to marry their child/children, due to one reason or the other but there is not a single instance where a boy has remained without the Holy Thread Ceremony due to any reasons whatsoever. A father will try his utmost to celebrate the *Sanskar* of his ward/s according to his

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1 Handoo, J.L., '*Kashmiri Aur Hindi Ke Lok Geet*', 1971, P. 70.

2 Upadhyaya, Dr.Krishen Dev- '*Malavi Loka Geet – Ek vivechanatmak Adhyana*' - Mangal Prakashan, Jaipur, 1964, p. 141. also, Pnaday, Raj Bali, '*Hindu Sanskar,*' *Varanasi,* 1960, P. 179.

economic conditions. He may beg or even borrow for performing the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony of his son/s. People have been found subscribing money for holding this ceremony for the economically weak or poor children of the society. The *Shastras* do not agree to a collective *Yagnyopavita* function due to the fact that separate '*Hawan Shalas*' are a must for the boys having different '*Gotras*' according to our scriptures.

The *Mekhala Sanskar* is completely different from the marriage ceremony as for its ritualistic aspect is concerned. Though the social customs, rites and rituals are different on both the occasions, yet different programs of rejoicing, social gatherings and the items of festivity are common and extended over a period of three days on both the functions. Singing, dancing, playing on musical instruments, video recording and still photography for the coverage of different items, continues for more than four days on both the events.

A few years earlier, a person whose son/s attained the '*Upanayan age*' and who, being desirous to celebrate it as an independent ceremony, i.e. not as an act of pre-marriage function, would start pondering about the different aspects of the celebrations, at least six months ahead of the actual date of the function. Because during those days procurement of various things needed for the ceremony, were not as easy as these are today. There were certain time consuming preparations to be made like purchasing firewood, rice and arranging cooks etc. A person had to arrange all these ahead of the scheduled date. Even today, the arranging of a suitable Guest Houses, cooks, items of crockery, tent houses and the time schedule of the '*Kula Guru*' are kept in view in advance for performing such activities. On an auspicious day known as the '*Shubha Muhurta*' or '*Sho>b Sa:th:*' the family priest (*Kula Guru*) is invited to fix the date for the function and make a list of auspicious days and

horal moments for initiating the following jobs connected with the function.:-

1. *Zyun TsaTun* - Chopping of firewood,
2. *KhAri:dA:ri:* - Marketing and purchasing,
3. *Dapun* - Sending of invitation cards,
4. *GarI Na: vay* - House cleaning,
5. *MA:nzi Ra:th* - The night of henna,
6. Divgon - Religious rites to invoke the blessings of gods,
7. *Duri BatI* - Official arrival of the in-laws,
8. *Mekhala* - The Holy Thread Ceremony. and
9. *Ko>shal Hom* - Thanks giving.

1. Zyun Tsatun - Chopping of firewood.

This is a function of the by-gone days. Now a days every thing is prepared or cooked on the L.P.G. gas stoves. Even the fire-wood required for the '*Hawan*', (Holy .Fire), is available in the markets of the urban areas. Earlier a day was fixed for chopping of fire-wood. A considerable portion of it was stored properly on an auspicious day so that it dried in the open and was ready for use on the scheduled date. The function was considered to be of social importance as the close relatives and the neighbours would assemble in the morning in order to help the host in this laborious task. Almost all the aunts of the parental sides, their husbands and their children would assemble to help the host. '*VAr*' (a salty rice preparation which, besides all the spices, included walnut kernels/meat, etc., as already discussed under the Chapter '*Mundan/ ZarI Ka:say* (p.s. pp .58-59') and loves of rice flour are prepared and served to all including the neighbours and relatives. The host's sister '*Pu:fi*' *(Po>f)*, is generally in charge of this preparation and she gets a good gratification called, '*Zang*' (for

details p.s. '*Mundan*' p. 61, fn. 1,). This salty dish is distributed to all the neighbours and the relatives, thus serving as information to all of them that the day for the function has been fixed and steps have been taken to perform it. After performing this function, the host can chop more firewood on any subsequent date according to his need and convenience. Unfortunately, this function of social value is fast dying due to the availability of the modern facilities; only the sweet memories remain now. The evenings on such occasions were full of excitement. The whole family would finish the feasting or the dinner as early as possible and the ladies of the house would assemble in a large room/ hall with a few '*Tumbakhna:ris*' (a tubular earthen musical instrument resembling the Indian '*Tabla*' on the one side with a long handle and fixed with goat skin) an earthen or a metal pitcher and a set of bronze cups, called '*KhA:si*'' as the musical instruments for singing and dancing. There are a number of folk songs attributed to this function. The most common one is recorded here: -

Azi hai Kari vari Tai Azi hai gindIvay,
Babay La:lIni gari gindIvay......Azi hai kari....
BA:ye La:lIni gari gindIway......Azi hai kari....

The translation of these lines is as under: -

We have prepared the '*VAr*' just today,
Let us start playing and dancing from today,
Let us play and sing in the house of our dear father/ grand father,
Let us play and dance in the house of our dear brother.

In this way the song starts with a quick rhythm and the names of all the members of the family and the relatives are included and repeated in the song, which is sung continuously against a high pitched fast musical background. The males and the guests sit in a separate corner of the same hall listening to the song with joy. A '*Hukah*' for the elders and smoking of cigarettes for the adults are the charm of the occasion. In the mean time a

young lady or a girl enters the hall with baskets containing cups, saucers, different bakery items and another girl or a lady with a '*Sama:wa:r*'. Salty tea is served to all those present in the house at this hour of festivity. After the tea follow other general and '*Li:la:*' songs in Kashmiri and the songs of other Indian languages. The hall is filled with the incense of burning '*Niger.*' The sweet black tea called '*QAhvI*' and the usual tea called '*Lipton'* tea follows according to the choice of the guests. Every body takes tea according to his/her choice and thus this social gathering comes to an end late in the night.

2. *KhAri:dA:ri*: - Marketing and purchasing

On an auspicious day, the host and his spouse start marketing and purchasing for the first time for the function. These include different items of grocery, clothes, dry fruits, barley, rice, oil, ghee, spices and all other materials required for the function. First preference is given to the purchase of those items which require the individual attention for their cleaning, washing, winnowing, sieving, pulverizing or chopping and grinding etc. so that these are ready for use. The selection of things takes much time and attention and the host, if he desires so, invites some of his experienced relatives to help him in these jobs. Thus all these things are bought and kept properly stored with identifying markings on them.

3. *Dapun* - Sending of Invitation cards.

'*Dapun*' means a formal invitation to all relatives, friends and neighbours and to the families of acquaintances. The process starts much earlier when the host makes selection for printing of invitation cards. Such invitations contain almost all the details connected with

the function. Besides the name/s of the boy/s and their parentage, the '*Yagnyopavita*' invitation card contains the following details with dates, days and venue: -

1. *Mahandi Ra:t-(MA:nzi Ra:th)*, the night of henna,
2. *Divgo>n* - Invocation of the deities, and,
3. *Yagnyopavita* - The Holy Thread Ceremony.

The invitation cards for the marriage of a son or daughter contains the information about the first two items which is followed by the date and venue of the marriage function. In addition to this it contains the names of the groom and the bride with their parentage and a special printed invitation slip for accompanying the '*Bara:t*' in case of a groom. In the case of a girl's marriage, it contains the first column as '*Mas Mutsrun*' meaning washing and unfolding of the plaits of the bride's hair.

After printing of the cards is complete, the host or any of his representatives, closely related to him, is selected to start the process of invitations on an auspicious day, known as '*Dapani Nerun*'. The cards with complete addresses are handed over to a member of the family or his representatives for distribution among far and near relatives. The persons thus deputed are called the '*Dapan Wol/Wajyani*' Special care of his/her feasting is made by the host to whose house he/she visits as a messenger along with the invitation card. He/she is served special tea with a variety of eatables and bakery items. In case more time is at his/her disposal or the return journey is not possible, a special feast is arranged in his/her honour. During yester years, the inviter would offer a four Anna or eight Anna coin [1] to the invitee, called '*DapIvIni*' who would return it with a three/five or ten rupee note known as '*PushervIni*'. This custom is now no more in vogue. It was a kind of sweet binding on the invited just

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[1] 25/50 pice coins, respectively.

to help the visitor monetarily for arranging the function or to meet his/her traveling expenses. After completing the job of inviting all far and near relatives, a day is fixed for giving a formal invitation to the in-laws of the host. On an auspicious day fixed earlier, selected close relatives of the host and some prominent members from the neighbourhood, generally on the basis of reciprocity, assemble at the residence of the host and after making some transport arrangements for the whole party, they reach the host's in-laws. Here a formal reception and welcome is arranged for all of them. Special feasting is held. The mother of the groom/ bride who is at this time a special invitee at her parental house, is given a suit and an '*ATIh>or*'[1], some money or a present like, a golden chain/ ring/ ear rings/ a set of bangles or a special shawl. The family members such as, the father, the boy/girl get a suit according to their social status and economic conditions. The young boys/girls who are invited to the function and accompany the party, are given cash presents on the basis of reciprocity or as directed by the mother of the groom/bride. All these things are accommodated in a steel trunk or in a suitcase that, besides the things referred to above, contains a packet of salt, some dry fruits/toffees and a pitcher of sugar candy, called the '*Na:bad No>t*'. All these presents come under the name '*DapIvIni*'. The in-laws who serve as host at the function, make special arrangements for their tea and feasting. The mother of the bride/groom, as the case may be, has to change her dress at her parental house with a new one presented to her on the occasion, besides wearing a fresh 'ATIho>r'.

The act of *'Dapun'* or sending of invitations is a very old custom and has undergone a number of changes from time to time. One thing, however, is more visible

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[1] For the details of the '*ATIho>r*' see the note under the heading, '*Vo>har Vo<d*' - Birth Day, (p. s. p. 54).

that the mode of presenting gratifications in kind has changed. The custom is either discouraged or has completely vanished, except in case it is a costly present - say in the form of a gold/silver ornaments. But the presents in 'cash' have increased more with the passage of time. This has affected the very soul of this society and the custom, so much so that it is becoming more cumbersome for not so rich families to continue such praxis. As the process has been continuing since long, there are a number of folk songs, called '*VanIvun*', prevalent in our society. More stress in these songs has been laid on the mother of the groom/bride whichever the case may be and it includes the common names from our mythology, like Lord *Krishna, Devaki* (mother of Lord *Krishna*),etc. Besides, it lays more stress on an auspicious date, day and the lunar mansions for initiating the function. A few lines are quoted here: -

DapInas kyutIye RathI mangInovmaye.
Sho>d Nechitur wuchinovmaye
DevIki: Ma:jye kyut RathI mangInovmaye,
Sho>d Nechitur ....,
Mahara:j SA:bun Ho>s mangInovmaye,
HAsitis so>nI sund sa:z karInovmaye,
TAthi peTh Krishna Mahara:j behInovmaye,
Sho>d Nechitur ....,

Its translation is as under: -

I sent for a chariot for the sake of sending the invitations,
I got selected the auspicious lunar positions for the same.
I arranged a chariot for mother *Devaki,*
I got selected. ....
I called for the elephant of His Highness, the '*Maharaja*,'
I decorated it with a golden bridle,
On it I got seated my *Krishna* as the groom,
I got selected the auspicious lunar position for the same.

4. GarI Na:vay —*House Cleaning*

The cleaning of the house on the eve of all our festivals is a common feature. The function attains more importance when we are celebrating marriage or the *Yagnyopavita* ceremonies. The mother, who works as the chief hostess on all such occasions, cleans a portion of the house on an auspicious day because the process of *Dapun* (sending invitations) cannot be initiated without the formal observation of this custom. As the function is more time consuming, the hostess makes cleaning of a small portion of the house on an auspicious horal moment so that she is at liberty to start the process of invitations at any time as per her convenience. For this purpose she cleans a small room, shelf or a ward-robe, etc., of the house on an auspicious day and the actual function is held two to three days prior to the actual date of the marriage or the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony. On the scheduled date of '*GarI Na:vay*', all unnecessary and unwanted articles of the house are stored separately. The rooms are thrown open for the arrival of the guests who start coming in from this date. Though initially very close relatives arrive on this date, the bulk of the guests and the relatives arrive either on the eve of '*Mahandi Ra:t/ DivIgon*' or on the date of the main function itself.

The aunt '*Pu:fi*' (Father's sister) of the boy/girl initiates this function with sweeping or washing a small portion of the house and the helpers do the rest of the work because she has other engagements like preparing '*VAr*' and its distribution. On this date and occasion she gets gratifications from her brother a number of times; as at the time of initiating the 'cleaning' of the house and at the time of preparation of the '*VAr*', etc. During the by gone days, the youngsters of the house used to collect the utensils from the neighbours which were used during the function. Now this item of work is no more existing in big

towns and cities, as these items are easily available on hire. Hence the question of collecting them from the neighbour-hood does not arise. During the earlier days, this occasion was of a special significance for the village potter, wh0 would arrive with a big coop full of earthen pottery items comprising different pots for cooking of different dishes, earthen cups and plates etc. Besides, the cost of these pots, he would get a good gratification in kind and in cash as a reward. The next was the turn of the carpenter who would attend to construct a temporary shed for the ceremonial kitchen and would get a good gratification '*Zang*' for his presence at the function. Lastly was the turn of the cook, who, after the construction of a temporary shed for the ceremonial kitchen, would construct approximately twelve feet long and ten inches broad fireplace of brick and mud known as '*VurI*'. The firewood was burnt in this gap to prepare the dishes and the cook was given a good gratification for the initiation of this work. Due to the advent of the ready-made kitchen-ware and the L.P.G. and its stoves on easy hire basis, all these things are the things of the past for the urban people, though all these celebrations still prevail in the villages and far flung areas of the valley.

The persons present on the occasion are served '*VAr*' in the after-noon. A programme of '*VanIvun*', singing and dancing is held either by professional singers or by the ladies of the house. Different musical instruments like the Harmonium, *TumbakhnA:r*', '*No>t*', a set of bronze cups known as the '*KhA:sy*' and musical-tongs, a special musical instrument known as '*ChumtI*' are played while singing. The '*VanIvun*' on the occasion is of the common order containing the names and the places from our ancient Indian mythology An elderly lady of the house or a professional lady, known as the

'*VanIvan Wa:jyani*'[1], is encircled by elderly ladies of the house/neighbour-hood and the '*VanIvun*' starts for the first time in the house on the eve of this function. A few lines are quoted here :-

Sho>klam kArith vanIvun hyatuye,
Sho>b fal dyutuye Ma:ji Bho>wa:nye.
VasIdi:v RazInew vanIvun hyo>tuye,
Sho>b fal ....,
VeshanI pa:d KamIlav nishi nAni' dra:ye,
JyaTi hayts Parami:sho>ara:ye,
BA:gi: RathInay tapI sA:ti' draye,
HarI Ganga:ye Namaska:r.
A:ka:shi pyaThI yali Ganga: dra:ye'
SA: ti' chis Ka: ran tI Di:vIta:,
AtshI RatshI vanIva:n patI patI dra:ye,
HarI Ganga:ye Namaska:r.

In the beginning of every ceremony or a ritual like '*GarI Na:vay.*'(Cleaning of house).'*MA:nz La:gIni'*, (application of Henna), '*Kru:l Kha:run*,'(decoration of the front door),'*Yoni tra:vun'*, (casting of the Sacred Thread) '*Dasta:r GanDun'*,(putting on a turban by the groom), etc., the '*VanIvun*' starts with the word '*Sho>klam'* (adoring Lord *Ganesh*). It may be pointed out that while starting *VanIvun* connected with any of the *Sanskar*, the first obeisance is paid to Lord *Ganesh*, the

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[1] In earlier times this lady was considered as an important figure on the eve of such functions. She retains this position even today. But due to the introduction of the modern facilities like printed 'VanIvan' books/tape recordings, etc., her importance has lessened with the result that there are very few professionals left in the field now. More-ever, with the introduction of the 'Rov/Roaf VanIvun' of the Muslims and its popularity among the Hindus as well has quickened the process of its disuse. The lady is looked after with great care and respect for all the days of her presence in the house and at the end of the function she is given a good gratification in the form of a suit or a head dress called, '*KalIvalyun*'. Due to the change in the dress pattern of the Kashmiri ladies, she is now given a '*Sari*' suit. This job is done by the young Kashmiri ladies using the printed books from which they read the 'VanIvun" or the modern audio systems are played on the occasion.

force behind all our performances. He is considered as our saviour who associates himself with us in all our deeds and takes them to the deserved end. The full '*Shalok*' (couplet) as contained in our Scriptures is quoted as under:-

Shoklambaradharam Vishnam, shashi varnam chaturbhujam, Prassana vadhnam dyaye, sarva vignopashantaye. Abhipritartha siddyartham, Poojito yah Surairapi, Sarva vigna chhide tasmai Shri Ganadhipatye namah [1]. '

The meaning of this '*Shalok*' is as under :-

> 'We send our salutations to the one, who clears all our hardships, who is the preserver of this world, whose body is bright and luminous like the moon, who has four arms, whose smiling face expresses joy and happiness, who is the remover of all our impediments and hindrances. Obeisance be paid to Lord '*Ganesh*', who helps to achieve the desired goals, who is adored even by deities and gods, and who is the destroyer of all obstructions.'

Probably the whole Sanskrit *Shalok* (couplet) must have been in use in the '*VanIvun*' during the days when Sanskrit was the language of the masses in the valley. But now only the initial word, i.e., '*Sho>klam*' is in use instead of the whole couplet.

The meaning of the lines of the folk song quoted above is as under: -

After paying due deference to Lord *Ganesh* and *Bhawani,* who favoured us with a good start of *VanIvun,*
We started *VanIvun* at the residence of king *Vasudev*
Mother goddess *Bhawani* favoured us with blessings.
The *Ganga* emerged from the Lotus feet of Lord *Vishnu,*
And god of the gods (*Shiv*) bore her in his mated hair.

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[1] Pandit, Keshav Bhatt., - *Shiv Pu:ja:*, Bombay, 1925 P. 29

It became visible due to the penance of *Bhagirath*, [1]
Salutations to the *Ganga* emerging from *Hara (Shiv)*.
When the *Ganga* became visible in the skies above,
It was accompanied by scores of gods,
The Nymphs, and Fairies followed it while reciting *VanIvun*,
Salutations to *Ganga* emerging from *Hara (Shiv)*.

Then follows the usual singing combined with the playing on the musical instruments as already described. The salty tea is followed by the sweet black tea known as '*QAhvI*' and the night passes in singing, dancing and merry making. Some people invite professional singers to add to the grace of the occasion. The professionals sing and dance for the whole night. In the middle of singing and dancing, the folk dancer called the '*Bachi*' takes a big plate '*Tha:*l' in his hands and while dancing and singing, he receives cash rewards from all those present on the occasion.

5. *MA:nzi Ra:th* - The Night of Henna.

As already described, festivities like chopping of wood, making purchases for the occasion, initiation of the invitations, cleaning of the house, celebrating the night of henna and invoking of deities are a common feature of both the functions i.e. *Yagnyopavita* and marriage. All the rituals, ceremonies, social customs and gatherings are a common feature on both the functions, though the religious/ritualistic performances differ to a great extent as far the final ceremonies of *Yagnyopavita* or marriage are concerned. Celebrations on both the function are extended over a period of three days i.e. *Mahandi Rat*,

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[1] An ancient king of the Solar race, the great grand son of Sagar, the king of Ajodhya who is said to have brought the river Ganga from the heaven on the earth by his penance and devotion so as to bring to life the 100 sons of Sagar who had turned into stones due to the curse of a Rishi.

Divgon and the final function *Yagnyopavita* or marriage whichever the case may be. The fourth day is generally called the closing day and is known as '*Ko>shal Hom*' and '*Pra:ya:chit*' respectively. In the case of the former it is a kind of thanks giving to the deities for the smooth and happy termination of the '*Hom*' or '*Yajnya*'. In the case of the latter if it has been the marriage of à daughter, known as '*Kanya Dan*'- one of the greatest charities according to the Hindu philosophy, prayers are held in the form of '*Pra:ya:chit*, 'let the sins of donating a girl (*Kanya*) be reduced'. More details will follow under the heading, 'Post marriage rituals', p.s., pp., 252-53).

The main functions on the eve of '*Mahandi Rat*' are: -

a) Preparation of '*VAr*' (A salty dish already described p.s., pp., 58-59),

b) *Kru:l Kha:run* (Decoration of the front gate), and

c) *MA:nz La:gIni*',Applying Henna to the groom/ bride.

a) Preparation of '*VAr*'

Although known as the night of henna/myrtle, the activities start early in the morning soon after the arrival of the paternal aunt called '*Pu:fi*' *(Po>f)* who once again starts the kitchen activities after lunch. At this time she has to prepare the '*VAr*' and the cakes of rice flour and as soon as she initiates the process, she is offered a good gratification called, '*Zang*' by her brother. After the preparation is ready she first serves a little of it along with a rice-cake to the deity and to the birds, etc. Next it is offered to the groom/bride and lastly it is served to all those present in the house. It is distributed to all neighbours and relatives along with cakes of rice flour. It may be pointed out that the '*VAr*' can be either vegetarian or non-vegetarian on this occasion.

b) *Kru:l Kha:run*-Decoration of the front gate

In the mean time the aunt *(Po>f)* shows her presence at the main gate of the house. After sweeping it with a special herbal broom known as '*Ja:vi LatshIj*', a soft , fragrant and thorn-less small wild plant used on the occasion as a special case. '*LatshIj*' in Kashmiri means a small broom that grows locally in the orchards. The main door is whitewashed afresh and flowers; leaves and creepers are painted in different colours on the walls of the entrance. Besides, the word, '*Swagatam*'- 'welcome,' expressions like 'such and such person (name of the groom) weds such and such (name of the bride)' and signs of '*Om*' and the mark of '*Swastika*' as sign of good omen, are also painted on the freshly white washed door entrance. She is again offered gratifications for initiating the decoration of the door. It may be stated that the aunt just initiates the function; some drawing experts in the house/family make the other decorations. The aunt is a special guest on this day as is evident from our folklore and '*VanIvun*', a few lines whereof are quoted here : -

'Krele' zange' kya:h kya:h paze',
Nu:n VAr tai Mo>harI pra:ss.
So>badra: Ma:le' kya:h kya:h paze'
VasIdi:v Ra:zun Mo>hrI Pra:ss.
Kru:l kha:rnas zangi ko>sI a:ye',
ParIme' shwo>ar tai Pa:rthiv MA:j,
So>badra: Ma:le' zangi ko>sI a:ye',
ParIme'shwo>r tai Pa:rthiv MA:j.

Its translation is under: -

What should be the gratification (*Zang*) for initiating the decoration (at the front door)?
She should get salt, '*VAr*', diamonds and a palace.
What should be offered as gratification to sister *Subhadra*?

She should get diamonds and a palace from king *Vasudeva.*
Who came first with a '*Zang*' on the eve of decorating the gate?
Who performed the *Zang* ceremony of *Subhadra,*
It was God Himself and the mother of *Partha* (*Arjuna).*

C) *MA:nz La:gIni* – Application of Henna.

Henna is considered most auspicious and a herb of joy and prosperity. Out of the sixteen items needed for make-up or beautification, '*Shodasha Singar*,' myrtle is considered to be the most important of all [1] ingredients. Myrtle is a symbol of well being and beauty according to the western civilization. Myrtle is sacred to *Venus*, the goddess of 'Love' [2]. The Egyptians and the Jews consider the myrtle as ever lasting for its evergreen nature. Besides, they consider it a main object of natural beauty and prosperity. To the Jews myrtle signifies the promise and beauty of God. In Greece its evergreen quality signifies immortality [3]. In this way growth of myrtle bushes in the vicinity of the courtyard or in the garden is considered most auspicious. In England it is considered lucky to have henna growing around [4]. Different myths are connected with it in different parts of the world. Some consider it just one of the colours while for others the henna plant has descended directly from Heaven. Different civilizations have owned it in different forms and ways and have different considerations for it but one

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1. Bhatia Harsha Nandini, - "*Soubhagya Ka Chinha, Sindhoor Ki Bhanti, Dharma Youg*, 25, November, 1962.
2. Oxford English Dictionary , Oxford, London, Vol. VII , P. 813.
3. Standard Dictionary of Folk-lore, Mythology and Legend, Oxford, London, Vol. II, 1975 P. 776.
4. Ibid., P. 716.

thing is common that it is considered as something that brings happiness and joy. The German brides used to wear a garland of henna leaves/ flowers. It is said that medieval German brides wore myrtle wreaths on their weddings [1]. Though the German society has undergone a great change during the recent past but the ritual was in currency till recent times and the memory may still be fresh in their minds. In the Indian society, henna has a special status, position and importance and this notion is increasing day by day due to our attachment to the established cultural order. We decorate hands, arms and the feet of the bride colourfully with a number of designs. No marriage or *Yagnnyopavita* is considered complete without the use of henna. Different functions and rites on both the occasions are extended over a period of three days and nights and we dedicate one full night and a day for the celebrations connected with the use of henna. We have named one full night as the '*MA:nzi Ra:th*' i.e., the night of '*MA:nz*' in Kashmiri language and '*Mahandi*' or '*Henna*' in other languages of the sub-continent. We have now professional and experts for decorating the hands and feet of brides and the ladies of the house with colourful designs. Besides, its social importance, this has kept alive the ancient art of Indian painting and designing. In this way the ladies of the sub-continent have preserved the great treasure of Indian art and paintings till date. Due to its medicinal properties its use increases in the summer months as it is considered to be a heat absorbent. It is also used in the *Ayurvedic* medicines and for dying the hair, etc.

The myrtle powder is kept for soaking early in the morning on the scheduled day by the paternal aunt, '*Pu:fi*', *(Po>f)* of the groom/bride. She adds colour, a pinch of salt /sugar, tea/coffee and some drops of oil to it

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[1] Standard Dictionary of Folk-lore, Mythology and Legend, Oxford, London, Vol. II, 1975 P. 717

so as to make its colour more bright and fast. It is kept duly covered for the full day to leaven it properly. In the evening the maternal aunt '*Masi*'*(Ma:s)* washes the right foot of the groom/bride with warm water and then the left one. Seated on a small wooden stool, called '*Chu:ki*', he/she is considered as adorable and pious as *Shiv/Shakti* at that moment of joy. In the mean time the hostess or an elderly lady of the house/family comes in with a decorated fire-pot, known as '*Isband Ka:nglr*' with hot charcoals and starts burning 'Niger' after taking a little of it in her finger tips and touching the fore-heads of the bride/groom and then casting it into the fire-pot. This action is repeated in respect of all those present there on the occasion. The elderly ladies assemble in a corner and start '*VanIvun.*' The paternal aunt comes with the pot of myrtle, which is now ready for use. Here both the ladies, *'Masi' (Ma:s)* and '*Pu:fi*', *(Po>f)* are given a good gratification called, '*Zang*' by the host. The *Pu:fi* applies a little myrtle on the fore-head of the groom/bride first and then a little of it is laid on his/her right hand and foot whereas the remaining decoration of the bride is made by an experienced lady of the family or by a professional myrtle decorator. However, there is no precedence of applying or decorating the hands/feet of a groom with myrtle either on the marriage or *Yagnyopavita* ceremonies. He is simply asked to dip the little finger of the right hand in the myrtle pot and the function is complete. The aunt makes her presence before one and all along with the pot of henna and thus receives cash presents from all the relatives and friends of the family. After-all no body can deny it, males out of the fear of being applied henna by compulsion and the ladies with the desire of getting a bit more for use, All make cash presents to her and thus the act represents a show of sweet and sour actions and reactions.

The '*VanIvun*' on this occasion is almost similar for both the ceremonies of marriage and *Yagnyopavita*. In

Kashmiri folk songs of these occasions, the local Kashmiri features are more visible though we also find an account of mythological names and accounts in them.

An instance is quoted here:-

MA:nze' rA:tsIy somblrith vA:tsIy,
VA:tsIy Ganga, Jamna, Saraswat,
VasIdi:v Ra:zInyan sombrith vA:tsIy,
KrishnIni MA:nze' rA:atsIy kiti,'
TulImuli Andaray RA:gnya vA:atsIy,
VA:tsIy Ganga. ....
Pa:tsha:h Ba:gas, TulImuli Na:gas,
Tra:gas manz khoT MA:nzr' posh.

Its translation is . as under: -

On the night of henna all came assembled
Here came the *Ganga,* the *Jamuna* and the *Saraswati*[1],
All came and assembled at king *Vasudeva's* house,
On the myrtle night of Lord *Krishna,*
RA:gnya came from the spring of *Tulamula*,
Here came the *Ganga,*. . ...
The flower of myrtle blossomed in the Garden of the king, in the spring of *Tulamula*, and in the pond.

In this way stress has been laid on the fact that the myrtle. plant and its flowers have emerged from the spring of *Tulamula*, the abode of goddess '*Ragnya:*' and thus it is considered as the pious herb. In some of the world civilizations, the plant is considered to have accompanied '*Adam*' when he was ousted from '*Eden*' along-with '*Eve*' as God directed them to live on the earth for their negligence. The story also contains that it was the only scented tree in the Garden of *Eden* and *Adam*

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[1] The three famous rivers of ancient Indian continent. Out of the three rivers the last one, '*Saraswati*' has already ceased to flow.

was allowed to take it along with him at the time of his ouster from the heavens [1].

The '*VanIvun*' and application of myrtle by the ladies continues for a long time and the hostess remains busy in greeting the guests and burning Niger in the decorated fire-pot. In the mean time tea, both salty and sugar, comes in separate '*Sma:wa:rs*' and it is served to all present on the occasion. Each person takes tea according to his/her own choice. This also serves as a signal to the ladies to stop "*VanIvun*'. Singing, dancing and playing on the musical instruments is followed just after finishing the tea. The host arranges professional singers at least on this occasion. In case the head of the professional singers has his own troupe along with him, they make a half circle around him otherwise, the ladies of the house including the guests, fill this gap and adults of the family/relatives play on all the musical instruments available in the house including those already mentioned. Thus starts singing and dancing and all present, hear it attentively. The main singer gets cash presents from the host when he begins playing on his instrument. He keeps the cash presents given to him, in a plate/*thali* in the center and others, especially the elderly listeners, have to follow suit. On this occasion the first song taken up by the singers is generally the one like this:

MA:nzye' rA:ts Sha:rad wA:ts gindA:nye',
Babai La:lIni shuri tai BA:ts gindA:nye'.

The first line of this couplet, which is repeated after every second line, is of great importance and worth pondering upon. The line contains the word '*Sha:rad*' meaning "*Sha:rada*' the goddess of wisdom and learning. Kashmir has been a seat of learning since the

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[1] .Standard dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend. Oxford, 1975 Vol. VII, P. 716

times immemorial and that is why it attained the name, '*Sha:rada Desha*' in a number of ancient scriptures. Invocation of the said goddess on this occasion clearly depicts the nature and the importance of the function. This also leads us to the conclusion that this ritual/custom has been in vogue in Kashmir since times immemorial.

The meaning of the couplet is: -

On the night of Henna, goddess *Sha:rada* has come herself for playing/dancing,

All, young and old members of '*BabI La:l's*' family are playing and dancing.

Here the word '*BabI La:l*' means the elder member of the family. Then follows the repetition of the names of all the members of the family, both male and female individually by the first singer and other companions repeat the first couplet of the song. In this way the song is sung for a long time at one stretch and rhythm as one continuous performance. The melody of the song is so rhythmic that all those present participate in singing. Soon after the other songs follow and the host serves tea or drinks to all according to the seasonal requirements. The singers continue for the full night and when they feel that the dawn is approaching, they conclude it with the following final song: -

Pra:tah ka:lah ghati karta: na:sh Krishna:,
Chama chA:ni a:sh Krishna: pu:ran kar.

Which means: -

Oh morning twilight, remove all our darkness,
Oh Lord *Krishna,* I expect you to fulfill all my aspirations.

The function ends with the approaching dawn.

6. *Divgo>n* - Rites to invoke the blessings of gods

In the scriptures, the ritual is known as '*Kanya Sanskar'*, which in Kashmiri language seems to have

changed and attained the form of '*Kani Shra:n*' probably due to the involvement of sacred bath which forms as one of its rituals. How it attained the common nomenclature of '*Divgo>n*' for both, (bride and the groom), cannot be explained with certainty. The words mean, 'a group of gods.' It is pertinent that invoking of the gods, as the ceremony involves, might be the main reason for attaining the name, '*Divgo>n*'. Any way, both these nomenclatures are in common use for this function among the people of Kashmir. It is a common ritual for marriages and *Yagnyopavita* [1]. The purpose is to purify the bride or the groom, as the case may be, for both the functions. It is done by special bathing while reciting from the Holy Scriptures so that the deities get pleased and the bride or the groom is purified for taking part in the main function (*Yagnyopavita* or marriage), which is held a day or two after this ritual. The deities are invoked and invited to the venue for holding the main function. In Kashmir the local populace call it as '*Kani Shra:n*', a bath given to the bride for marriage or to the groom for both, marriage or *Yagnyopavita* The word '*Kani*' seems to be a direct derivation from the root Sanskrit word '*Kanyak*' or '*Kanya*', meaning a virgin girl - a young unmarried girl who has not attained puberty.

The place for holding the ritual is specially pasted with clay and cow dung. The family priest, on his arrival, makes certain geometrical diagrams on it at the left corner top. The markings are called '*Kalush*' or '*Kalash*' and the mythical symbols thus made on the ground stand for the main deities, the nine planets called, '*Nava Griha*' including the earth, the sun and the twelve Zodiac signs, called the '*Ra:shis*'. The '*Kalash*' differs with the change of the ritual and there is almost a separate '*Kalash*' for separate rituals. '*Kalash*' is a Sanskrit word, meaning a

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[1] Hilbrant, A. F. – 'Hindu Worship'- Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Vol., XII P. 795.

pitcher, doom or top of a building. In fact, a pitcher or something like that filled with walnuts and water, is kept on the geometrical symbols made by the '*Kula Guru.*' With the help of the limewater mixture, the Priest, facing west, draws a picture of a plant on the wall of the room, just near the '*Kalash*' where the ritual is held. He decorates it with the dots of vermilion (*Sindhu:r/SyndIr*) and Henna. Here it may be pointed out that in case of a son's marriage, the daughter-in-law is to be seated besides this painting on her first arrival in her new home. This figure is known as '*DivtI Mu:n*'. The word '*Mu:n*' means 'a picture', 'a pillar' or 'imperfect whitewashing' in ancient Kashmiri language. Even today we have the words '*TsitIri tI Mu:ni*' for faulty whitewashing or besmearing with clay and water or '*Tsi:n tI Mu:ni*' meaning, pillars/walls.

Beneath it, he makes one more geometrical figure for placing the '*DivtI Gu:li*'- seven balls of cooked rice mixed with '*VAr*', dandelion '*Hand*' [1], curd, milk and a little Ghee. The words '*DivtI Gu:li*' appear to be derived from '*Devata*' and '*Golak*' or '*Gola*' meaning ball-like things offered to the deity. The seven deities represented on the occasion are known as seven '*Matrikas*', like: -

1. *Brahmi*, - an epithet of goddess *Lakshmi*,
2. *Mahishowari - an epithet of goddess Parwati*,'
3. *Kaumari*, - represents '*Pancha Kanya*,'
4. *Vaishnavi*, - an epithet of goddess *Durga*,
5. *Varahi*, - one of the seven *Matrikas*, the spouse of Lord *Vishnu* in *Varah Avatara*
6. *Narasimhi*, - an epithet of *Chamunda*, and
7. *Indrani*, - the spouse *Indra*.

These are the seven forms of Mother-goddess, which represent the seven forces, behind this universe.

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[1] A vegetable grown in wild specially prepared for the new mothers or for a woman who has given birth to a child recently. It is considered very rich in iron content.

After paying salutations to all these deities, the Sacred Fire is lit and offerings of dry fruit, sugar candy, ghee and barley etc. are made to it while reciting hymns from the scriptures. A tumbler containing sanctified water, milk, curd, flowers, ghee and a nut called, '*Za:fal* [1]'- 'nutmeg,' are put into it. This water tumbler is used in initiating the Holy Bath of the boy/girl, which ever the case may be. The scriptures entitle the maternal aunt '*Ma:mi:*' (*Ma:mani*') to clean wash or besmear the main corridor of the house with clay for performing the ritual bath of the bride/groom. The priest makes an auspicious mark of '*Swastika*' [2] on the ground and after venerating it with flowers, etc., the girl/boy is seated on it over a small stool, called '*Chu:ki*'. Thus starts the '*Kani Shra:n*'. This is a hectic occasion for photographs, *VanIvun* reciting ladies, and all exchange greetings. Males greet the host with the words '*Mubarak*', 'greetings' and the ladies greet the hostess with the words, '*PoshtI*'. At this moment Niger is burnt in a beautifully decorated Fire Pot (*Ka: ngIr*). Four young girls are called in and they hold the four corners of a scarf-like piece of cloth called '*Chunni/SA:di*' which is kept over the head of the bride/groom and on which the aforesaid Holy Water of the tumbler is dropped gently. This is a stage for a boy or a girl when he/she leaves adolescence and enters into the realm of either '*Brahmacharya*', in the case of the '*Yagnyopavita*' ceremony or the '*Grahasth Asharam*', 'Family life' in the case of a marriage. Thus in this way an important stage begins in ones life.

The four small girls referred to above depict:

1. The four stages of life:

   a) Adolescence, b) *Brahamcharya,*

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[1] One of the three nuts listed under '*Trifala*'- An Ayurvedic medicinal nut.

[2] A straight cross mark with four squires one each at the end point with one side open with an outer rectangle with four rectangles within its corners. It is a mark attributed to Lord *Ganesha* - the propeller of all auspicious deeds.

c) *Grahasth*, and, d) *Va:nprasth*.

2. The four enemies of human life :-
   a) *Kam* (Lust), b) *Krodh* (Anger),
   c) *Lobh* (Greed), and, c) *Moh* (Desire).
3. The four stages of *Pra:na:yam* :-
   a) *Pran* ('Ingoing' respiration)
   b) *Apan* ('Outgoing' respiration)
   c) *Dhyan* (Meditation), and
   d) *Moksh* (Salvation).
4. The four human pursuits:-
   a) *Kaumarya*, (Virtue), b) *Aishawarya*, (Wealth),
   c) *Vilas*, (Sensual Enjoyment), and
   d) *Moksh*, (Salvation).
5. The four *Rins* – or the duties of a man.
   a) *Janam Rin*, -The duty to ones life,
   b) *Deva Rin* - The duty towards our gods,
   c) *Rishi Rin* -The duty towards our saints/teachers, and
   d) *Pitri Rin* - The Duty towards our fore-fathers.

The boy/girl is considered as *Shiva/Shakti* or *Vishnu/ Lakshmi* while performing this ritual and their parents adore him/her in that form. The father is given the water tumbler in his hand while the *Parohit* recites hymns from the Holy Scriptures preferably the '*Purusha Sukhta*', a hymn from the *Rgveda*. Hymns from other scriptures are also recited at the time of bathing *Shiva* and *Parwati* or Lord *Vishnu* and *Lakshmi*: This is done to remove the two impurities of the boy/girl. These are :-

a) *Karma Mal* - The impurities of the previous births, and
b) *Karna Mal* - The impurities of the present birth.

All the water of the tumbler is sprinkled over the bride/groom/s and in case of marriage of a son or daughter, the nutmeg '*Za:fal*' is handed over to the father of the boy/girl because he needs it on the eve of marriage at the '*Dwar/Da:rI, Puja*' or paying homage to the gods at

the door on the eve of marriage ceremony. It is just like '*Milani*' in the Indian way of marriages. At the time of the bath and even afterwards, the *VanIvun* and other activities continue. A small girl is asked to play on the '*TumbakhnA:r*' during this ritual bath. It is considered to be an auspicious sign besides keeping the boy/girl apprised of and connected with the worldly features of the hustle and bustle in the midst of their attaining the high profile of gods though for a temporary period. After this ritualistic bath the boy/girl takes the normal bath in a bathroom. The '*VanIvun*' continues in the house with pricks of humor and satire by the young ladies. The maternal people arrange the clothes and other garments, etc., for the boy/girl and the mother on the occasion. The main items contained are: -

1 A suit, shirt, under-shirt/wear, towel, trousers, slippers/ shoes, socks, handkerchief, etc., for the boy.
2. In case of the bride, she gets a complete Sari-suit and a 'Head-gear,' and a shawl from her maternal parents in addition to some of the above mentioned accessories.

Even the soap and oil, etc., used by the boy/girl on this occasion comes from his /her maternal house.

This is a common feature while performing the *Yagnyopavita or* the marriage ceremonies of a son/ daughter. Now with the changing world a visible change has occurred in this custom. Now-a-days all these things are arranged by the parents of the boy/girl and the maternal people now offer presents in the form of cash/gold as they wish or desire. The *VanIvun* of this occasion is based on our mythological events/names and the places of religious importance. A few examples are quoted here: -

Aushad [1] *Na:ray* [2] *thovamay poshi vuz livithly,*
Me:khali Mahara:zas chu Kanye' Shra:n,

[1] It is the short and Kashmiri form of the word, '*Aushadhi*' meaning a medicinal herb.
[2] A small earthen pitcher.

Vasundara:[1] *Ma:mni thovye' poshi voz livithIy*
KrishnI Maha:rajas chu Kanye' Shra:n,
Pi:ri[2] *tal thAvamay MaredI RIkhIy.*
HIkI a:yi BhawA:ni' za:fal[3] *hyath.*
The translation of these lines is as under: -
With the water contained in a small pitcher decorated with flowers and medicinal herbs,
The corridor is clean washed, and besmeared (with the clay and water), because it is the '*Kanyi' Shra:n'* of the groom for *Yagnyopavita.*
The aunt *Vasundara,* kept the corridor duly cleaned with clay and water and decorated it with flowers,
Because of the *Kani' Shra:n* of *Krishan Maha:raj,*
Under the small stool '*Chu:ki.*' there is the lining made from lime powder,
Bhawani: (the spouse of Lord *Shiva*) came briskly with a nutmeg.

The maternal uncle carries the bride/groom in his lap from the bathroom up to the '*Hawan Shala*', the place where the ritual is performed. On this occasion it is for the first time that the girl makes the use of a *Sar*i officially. The bride/groom is brought to the '*Hawan Shala*' with face covered so that his/her first look is aimed at the wall where the '*DivatI Mu:n'* is painted. Again, Niger is burnt and the relatives and others assemble at the '*Hawan Shala*'. Some embrace and hug the bride/groom and kiss his/her forehead while others extend greetings to the host and the hostess. The parents and the bride/groom keep fast on this day till the function is over. The *Kula Guru*

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1 It is one of the names attributed to the mother earth. Panini has given the following derivation for it, '*Vasum Dharayati Yah Sa eva Vasundharah'*. The preserver of all minerals and hence *Vasundhara.*

2 A wooden seat like a low stool known as '*Chu:ki'* '*Pi:r'*, is the old Kashmiri version for the Indian '*Choki*' or '*Chouki*'.

3 Nutmeg - A nut used in the *Ayurvedic* medicines. It is also used in betel leaves and in the '*Qahva*' tea to make it more fragrant.

purifies the boy/girl by sprinkling the Holy Water over them duly consecrated through the recitation from the scriptures. In case of marriage, a fresh *Yagnyopavita* is put on the boy and a marking of '*Tilak*' of vermilion is made on his forehead whereas the groom for the *Yagnyopavita* is marked with the vermilion mark only. It may be added that the special thread called the '*NA:rivan*' is tied on the wrists of the boy in both the cases. It is for the first time that this thread is tied to the left wrist of the girl at this occasion before the actual date of her marriage. After the purification, etc., is over, offerings comprising dry fruit, sugar candy and ghee are offered to the Holy Fire as oblation to the deities. The rituals connected with the groom end here though the parents have to complete a few rites more before the ritual finally comes to an end.

The process is a bit lengthy in the case of a bride. In the mean-time the ornaments and vessels etc., called '*Satlra:th*' in the common language, which the father has to give as a wedding gift to his daughter, are brought to the *Hawan Shala*. The *Shastras* authorize the daughter to receive these items as a donation from her father after checking their purity. It is because of this very fact that the *Kula Guru* asks the girl to strike these presents with a small stick of '*Plash*' or '*Mulberry*' so as to ascertain their purity formally before accepting them. It is said that the pure vessels make sound when struck whereas the impure vessels do not. An experienced lady of the house keeps herself present for parting the hair of the bride from the center into two locks with the help of two duly consecrated *Plash/Mulberry* sticks and then ties them into two braids with the help of the '*NA:arivan*' thread. The bride, seated on a wooden stool '*Chu:ki*' like goddess '*Parwati:*', the spouse of Lord *Shiva* or like '*Lakshami:*', the spouse of Lord *Vishnu*, is decorated with ornaments jewelry, etc., called '*Singa:r*'. She, at the moment, is considered as one of the said goddesses seated on her

godly throne and here she is given the '*Abhisheka*' which include:-

1. *Avahana* - The ritual call or invitation.
2. *Asana* - A seat,
3. *Padya* - Water to wash the feet.
4. *Argya* - Water to wash the face.
5. a:*tsIman* - Water to rinse the mouth.

In this way end the nine *Sanskaras* of a girl as contained in our scriptures. [2] Here also four young girls keep a spread scarf over the bride's head and the fifth small girl is asked to strike gently the '*TumbakhnA:*r', the musical instrument. All the five girls represent the five great ancient Indian women who, though married, are considered to be eternal virgins as mentioned in the *Puranas*. They are;-

1, *Ahalya*, 2. *Draupadi* , 3. *Tara* , 4. *Sita*, and 5. *Mandudari*.

All these great ladies, of ancient India, though married, are considered as '*Pancha Kanya*' - 'Five Eternal Virgins,' by the *Puranas* for their great deeds/ virtues and virgin-like purity.

The five girls also depict the five elements '*Pancha Bhutas*' or Five '*Maha Bhutas*' or five main elements of all animate of the universe. These are: - 1. Water, (*Jal*), 2. Fire, (*Agni*), 3. Earth, (*Bhumi*), 4. Air, (*Vayu*), and 5. Ether, (*Akash*).

Or

The five human virtues - *Pancha Vargas* , or the five essential duties of a householder, called the *Pancha Maha Yajnyas*. These are:-

1. *Vidhya*, (Wisdom), 2. *Patratwa*, (Deserving), 3. *Dhan*, (Wealth), 4. *Vilas*, (Sensual, enjoyment) and 5. *Moksh*, (Salvation).

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[1] Royal welcome

[2] Bhatt Pt. Keshav, *Mekhala Pustak*, '*Kanya Sanskaa*' 1925,P. 134-155.

The kitchen preparations required on this occasion are: -

1. *Khir* (Rice, milk and sugar pudding),
2. *Mo>ngI Wari'*, (Fried cakes of crushed *Moong* added with salt and spices).
3. Cakes of rice flour, 4. Preparation of '*VAr*',
5. Preparation of '*Hand*',(dandelion), and
6. A vessel of cooked rice for offering to gods/ deities.

All these things are brought to the '*Hawan Shala*' and the priest makes seven round balls of the cooked rice after mixing it with '*VAr*', *Hand*', milk, curds, and ghee. Making offerings of the left over rice to the Holy Fire, he asks the hostess to put the rice balls in front of the '*DivtI Mu:n*'. The hostess, also called the '*YAzman Ba:y*' worships these as the seven forms of goddess *Shakti* as already mentioned. After completing this process seven earthen plates called '*TA:kya*' are filled with sweet rice-milk pudding called, '*Khir.*' A cake of rice flour, a cake made of *Moong* pulses, '*Mo>gI WAri*' a walnut, a little of '*VAr*' and '*Hand*', a string of special thread called '*NA:rivan*' and a walnut, is kept on each of them. All the seven plates known as '*DivtsI tabchi*'[1] are venerated in the form of seven deities and are then gifted to the seven ladies closely related to the family, i.e. mother's sister/s, father's sister/s, Aunts, grand mothers and other ladies of

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[1] There is a ritual of similar nomenclature celebrated by some of the Kashmiri Hindu families, known as '*DivtsI Khir.*' This function is held on a horal moment and on an auspicious day of the year and seven small girls 'Kanyas' and a boy (representing Shiva/ Vishnu) are venerated. The word '*DivtsI*' appears a direct derivation in the plural form of '*Deyviyan*', the seven forms of goddess *Durga*. These are, '*Brahami, Mahishowari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Narasimhi,* and *Indrani*. The Mother Goddess is venerated in the above mentioned forms in a number of families of Kashmiri Pandits according to their individual family rites and rituals. Some people arrange a *Hawan* on this occasion. After washing the feet and hands of all the invited children, vermilion is applied on their fore-heads and *NA:rivan* is tied to their wrists. They are worshipped with flowers and offered some cash payment as, *Dakshina*'. A towel or hanky, a bowl of '*Khir*' and a spoon is also gifted to each of them on the occasion.

the family who are the cousins and belong to the same '*Gotra*'. Here the hostess and other ladies of the house are asked to rotate round themselves seven times keeping their hands stretched up and palms open. This appears the only dancing pose surviving till date in a ritual with a religious background. The last but not the least ritual of the function is to sprinkle the holy water from the '*Kalash*' on all present on the occasion and distribute the walnuts to all as '*Naived*'. Thus end the rituals connected with the '*Devgo>n*'.

We know that the man has always paid his obeisance to the natural powers and gods before starting any act of the betterment for his own self. He has considered all his happiness, distress, pain and sorrow as the wish of gods and he has always accepted all these ups and downs in his life as the gifts from the above. This thought has prevailed from times immemorial and is prevalent even today. That is why, on the eve of any function of joy and happiness, our first action has been to invoke gods and, therefore, many rites having obvious social values like the marriage rites, etc., are connected with the worship [1] of gods and deities. The rituals and customs of this type are prevalent among many societies and religions of the world. There is a continuance of such rituals and rites in India since the time of the *Vedas*. There is a precedence of such rituals in Kashmir on the eve of all functions connected with our religious ethos including our marriage and *Yagnyopavita* ceremonies as is contained in our folk songs '*VanIvun*'. These contain the names of people and places from the Indian mythology. Thus one cannot deny that these have been in vogue since ancient times.

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[1] Hilbrant, A .F. – 'Hindu Worship'- Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol., XII P. 795.

In the following lines the gods and goddesses are approached for the welfare and betterment of the bride and the groom :-

Po:re‘ kho>tkho Sirye‘ di:sho, du:re‘ karyo Namaska:r,
tsI ti chukh sa:rinly pra:na:di:sho, So>riv TapI Resho Sada:shiv.
SI:ta:yi o<sum so>nI sund ki:sho, KhA:rith ta ni:ham DanDakhvan
Ra:m tI LAkhiman sI:ti: tas Di:sho, So>riv TapI Resho Sada:shiva.
VasIdi:va Ra:zIni DharamI po>ro<sho, Ja:yi ja:yi lAditham Dewa:n Kha:n,
So>Thkuk dyo<n tai Mo>khtuv Pasho, So>riv TapI .
Kotar bacho karu bol bosho, Kotur chhaham Divgo<nas peTh,
MA:li Ma:ji bu:znay bol tai bosho, So>riv TapI ---

Its translation is as under: -

Oh sun, you have emerged from the East, your homeland
I pay my salutations to you from a distance.
You are also the life - source for all of us,
Oh *Rishi* remember the everlasting Shiva in your deep penance.
Sita had the plates of golden hair,
She was taken to the deep forests known as the *DanDak Vana,*
Lord *Rama* and *Lakshmana* were seen accompanying her, Oh *Rishi* remember ....
Oh law-abiding person of king *Vasudeva,*
You constructed the palatial buildings with lofty drawing - rooms ,
Plinths made of diamonds and roofs made of pearls at a number of places, Oh *Rishi* remember ....

Oh young one of a pigeon,[1] sing a sweet song,
You are just like a pigeon at the *Devgo>n*,
Your parents have listened to your sweet singing,
Oh Rishi remember ....,

In the same folk song there is a picturesque account of some of the months of the year. A few examples are quoted here: -

Chitri: pho>laham verike'mi' posho,
Goshas rATItham Janglan ja:y,
Sontas tI Navrehas tsIti chhukh kho>sho,
So>riv TapI Resho Sada:shiv.
A:dan pho>lhama ba:da:m posho,
Goshas rATItham ParabatI ja:y,
Cha:ni pho>lanI ba:gan a:mut josho ,
So>riv TapI Resho ....
Zi:Thi: pho>lham Gula:b poho,
Goshas rATItham thari pe'th ja:y, -----
HA:ri: pho>lham tsI ti Pamposho,
Goshas rATItham Saras manz ja:y, ----
Shra:vIni pho>lham DatIri' posho,
Goshas rATIatham tsho>Tas peTh ja:y., ------
BA:dIri pho>lham Kapse' posho,
Goshas rATItham vuDIran ja:y, -------
Ka:rtiki pho>lham tsI ti Kong posho,
Goshas rATItham PA:mprI ja:y.

The translation of these lines is as under:-

On the onset of Chaitra [2], the '*Virikyum* [3],' flower blossomed,
He chose his beautiful abode in the forests,
You chose to blossom at the dawn of the Spring (*Sonth*) or the New Year's Day (*Navreh*)

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[1] Used in the sense of an innocent person.
[2] The last month of the Vikram era.
[3] It is one of the herbal flowers now at the verge of extinction. The *Nilamata Purana* Edited by Dr. Ved Kumari Ghai Vol. II, has named it as *Iramanjari.'*

Oh! Rishi remember the Almighty....
Oh! Almond blossom, you have arrived early,
And chosen your abode in the beautiful *'Ba:da:m Wa:ri'* (Almond Gardens) of *Ha:ri: Parbat*[1],
With your blooming the gardens have become excited and colourful,
Oh ! Rishi remember ....
The Rose blossomed in the month of *Je'shT*[2]
You have chosen your sweet place on a thorny bush
Oh! Lotus you have blossomed in Ha:r[3]
You have chosen your abode in a pond,
You have blossomed in *Shra:vana:*[4] Oh Stramonium[5],
And chosen your place on a heap of rubbish
Oh! Cotton flower you have blossomed in the month of *Bha:dra:*[6],
You have chosen the hillock as your abode,
Oh! Saffron flower you have blossomed in *Ka:rtika:*[7]
And your abode is at Pampore[8] hillocks.
In this way there is a beautiful description of some of the summer months of the year with their special blossoms and their places of growth.

After completing the *'VanIvun'* and the religious rituals, all the members of the family and the guests take their lunch/dinner as the case may be.

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1 The famous hillock in the vicinity of Srinagar city, considered as the abode of goddess *'Sharika'*.

2 The second month of the Vikram era known as *Jyashta*.

3 The third month of the Vikram era known as *Ashada*.

4 The fourth month of the Vikram era known as *Shravana*.

5 A wild medicinal plant, its seeds are intoxicant.

6 The fifth month of the Vikram era known as *Bhadrapada*.

7 The seventh month of the Vikram era known as *Kattak*.

8 A town near Srinagar city.(J.& K.) Called *'Pampore'*, famous for Saffron cultivation.

7. Duri' BatI
Official arrival of the In-laws

It is one of the main social functions combined with the '*Devgo>n*' rites especially on the eve of he *Yagnyopavita* ceremony. The in-laws of the grooms'/ brides' father and their very close relatives arrive at their daughter's house on a pre-scheduled date along with a large steel trunk containing clothes, for their daughter, son-in-law, the girl (In case of marriage) and the boy/s(in case of marriage/*Yagnyopavita*) . It also contains a packet each of salt, sugar, some specially prepared bread, turmeric (representing spices), puffed sugar-candy cakes, '*Bta:say*', a pitcher of sugar candy, a present in cash or in gold and an '*ATIho>r*' for their daughter. On reaching the main gate of the house of their daughter, the ritual of '*a:lath*' (to throw water and rice grains in a plate after roving it round the head of the main invitee/s carrying the trunk), is held by the eldest-lady of the house. She receives cash present from the father of her daughter-in-law as an entrance fee, which she has to return to the payee after adding some amount to it or even after doubling the amount. It is known as '*PurvIni*'. The guests are led to a room already arranged and decorated for them. Here milk, biscuits, sweets are served to them as a special privilege which is followed with a special lunch. This special feasting is known as '*GarI Atsan Sa:l*'- 'Feasting on the occasion of entering the house'. After feasting, the mother, brother's spouse or the elder daughter-in law of the hostess, opens the trunk and shows all things to the guests who by then assemble in that room. One of the guests from the maternal party starts collecting cash presents from all the guests accompanying them. It is known as '*GarI AtsIvIni*', cash present on account of entrance into the daughter's house. The collected money is handed over to the hostess along with

a list of payees (guests) for her reference. During all this time burning of Niger continues and the greetings are extended by one and all. The father of the son-in-law, besides returning the *'a:lath'*, has to pay the cost of carriage of the trunk, called *'MAhniv Ha:rI'* to the father-in-law of his son along with some packets of sweets as a gesture of good-will.

In the evening elderly ladies and the hostess assemble once again to take the *'DivtI Gu:li'* to the pond/ river/ stream as the case may be. The seven balls of cooked rice, a little rice out of the left over from the offerings of rice made to the Holy Fire, a knife and a walnut, all these things are kept in a plate *'tha:I'* and taken to the river/stream for immersion. On their way to the river and back they sing the following *VanIvun:* -

Ani gaTi kanyan sI:ti' kArith na:lImAtiye',
Shri Saraswatiye'[1] *ya:rIbal vas,*
Ani gaTi kanyan sI:ti' karith nalImAtiye',
DevIki [2] *MA:jay ya:rIbal vas,*
Ta:rIbalI[3] *khAtskhay shra:na kA:rith,*
Dya:na: sorthay Bartha:[4] *sund.*

The meaning of these lines is as under:-

In the darkness while hugging the cobbles on the rough road.
Goddess *Saraswati,* you start for the river bank,
In the darkness while tossing over the cobbles on the road,
You, mother *Devaki* start for the rivulet,
You have just returned after bathing at the river crossing,

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[1] The goddess of knowledge and wisdom.

[2] Mother of Lord *Krishna.*

[3] A Ghat on the river bank fixed for crossing the river in a boat. A famous place in the *Dal Lake*, Srinagar, Kashmir, where the boats are loaded or un-loaded.

[4] Sanskrit word '*Bharta*' meaning 'husband'.

While bathing you remembered your husband.

On reaching the water-spot, the ladies immerse the rice balls into the water gently and after making a few cross marks on the surface of the water with the help of the knife, they take kernels of the walnut as '*Naived*' and return home.

According to the Indian mythology, water is considered to be a veil between the earth and the under-worlds thought to be the abode of the *Asuras*. The under-worlds are thought to be seven in number. They are: -

1. *Atal*, 2. *Vital*, 3. *Sutal*, 4. *Rasatal*,
5. *Talatal*, 6. *Mahatal*., *and* 7. *Patal* .

By making seven cross marks on the surface of water after immersing the seven rice balls we give the share of our offerings to the said seven under-worlds. In this way all the rites, rituals and customs connected with the pre- *Mekhala Sanskar* come to an end.

8. *Hawan Shala* - for Yagnyopavita

The *Yagnyopaveta, Mekhala, Upanayan, Upayan*, the *Brahm Sutr*, and '*Yoni*' are some of the names given to the Holy Thread Ceremony. It is perhaps the most important duty of the parents as well as of the teacher in the form of *Kula Guru* to recognize the absolute necessity of this *Sanskar*. Those who bring a child into this world in a family of twice born, make themselves directly responsible to the law of the *Karma*. These responsibilities cannot be attained without giving proper *Sanskars* or guidance to our children. Even little carelessness or selfishness on the part of the parents, will involve heavy penalty and it would cause hindrances in their child's path to spiritual attainments. If parents fail to extend all the help and guidance, which their child has a right to get from them, they shall be doing genocide of their community as a whole. Yet how often do the modern parents entirely ignore this obvious responsibility? How often is their child ignored by them and considered just an object of fatuous vanity? Man has been bestowed with power to think, assess and attain. It is no excuse that a person may confess that he did a murder in a fit of rage and should be let free because it was a senseless act. But that does not entitle him to be let free from the clutches of the law. In the same way it is the utmost duty of a person to see his children better off and prosperous. Man has been provided with the power of thinking and everything can be achieved in this world with the power of thought. Our civilization, our *Vedas, Puranas* and other Holy Scriptures are not only works of art and poetic excellence but have also inspired the people of India through ages with their useful instructions about different aspects of human life. Not only this, our great *Rishis*, saints, philosophers and scholars have so deeply associated themselves with these scriptures that they have prepared

separate treatises for different shades of knowledge and thought. That is why our *Rishis* are considered authorities in different fields of knowledge and are of global importance and fame even today. One among such philosophers and thinkers is *Rishi Laugakshi*, who is said to be the compiler of all the rituals including the *Sanskars in* the form of a *'Samhita'*. The rituals, customs and rites in whatever form they have reached to us, are the out come of long penance and deep research of *Laugakshi*. He has classified and approved twenty-four *Sanskars* for all without any gender discrimination and so far most of us stick to all the twenty-four *Sanskars,* in whatever shape and form they have reached us to day. Presently we perform only nine *Sanskars* in respect of our female children even though 'no such discrimination is made between the males and the females as for as our scriptures are concerned. One such *Sanskar* is *Upanayan* or *Yagnyopavita*, which we perform in respect of males only. No doubt our *Vedas*, *Upnishads* and the *Vedangas* clearly say that a girl child is entitled to the study of Holy Scriptures after her *Upanayan* and a girl possessing the *Yagnyopavita* is worthy of marriage, but still the things are quite different. *Manusmriti* clearly mentions that 'even if a person is a low caste by his birth, the *Sanskars* elevate him as a *Brahmin.*[1] It is because of this that an unmarried boy wears a three fold Holy Thread before marriage and it gets doubled after marriage. His father-in-law, while offering his daughter in marriage, offers the additional three strings of the Holy Thread to the groom and thus he shoulders the responsibility of his spouse as is contained in the scriptures.

While commenting on the *Upanayan Sanskar*, *Rishi Laugakshi* has clearly mentioned that he has compiled all these rituals and rites from various sources. For instance he confirms that he has taken the ritual

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[1] Bhatt, Pandit Keshav, *Mekhala Pustak, Upayan* 1925, p. 2.

Bijawapan from various *Grahisutras* [1]. Latter *Valmiki* gave a vivid description of Lord *Ramas Yagnyopavita* in his famous epic *Ramayana.*

In earlier days when more space was available, a major portion of the courtyard was plastered with brown clay mixed with the fresh cow dung. The specific places for *'AgnI Ko>nD,'* the Holy Fire, the *'Kalash'* and the places for other deities to be invited on the occasion, were kept ready for use a few days before the actual date of the function. Barley was sown at places like the outer space around the *'AgnI Ko>nDa,' 'Kalash'*, etc., so that these places looked green and pleasing to the eye, on the day of the actual function. This would give a divine look to the whole *Hawana Shala.* Now a days the preparations of cleaning and decorating the place starts as soon as the host is free from the *'Divgo>n'*' function. The function generally requires a space of 9x9 meters. And this much space is thoroughly clean washed and mud plastered. In the center is raised a *'Hawan Kund'* – a square pit measuring 1x1 meters supported with bricks and mud so that it can hold firewood for the Holy Fire. The main *'Kunda'* is made in a square shape whereas its upper outer side is made in a triangular form pointing towards the east. To its left on the top is laid the base for the *'Kalash'* by the priest with different coloured lime powders. It is considered to be the seat for seven *'Grihas'*- planets, excluding the sun and the moon, who have a separate and a special place at this particular function. The priest places the pitcher containing walnuts on the *'Kalash'* after recitation of Holy *Mantras.* The remaining space to the right of the *'Kalash'* is meant for: -

1. The moon, called the *Chandra Deva.*
2. The Sun, called the *Surya Deva,*

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[1] Bhatt, Pandit Keshav, *Mekhala Pustak, Upayan* 1925, p. 2.

3. The '*Mandala*', a group of twelve kingdoms meant for the twelve '*Rashis*' or Zodiac signs

4. The '*Khe'trIpa:l'*- Two clay pots at the top right side with a little water and some grains of rice/barley in them. These are considered as the '*Kshetrapalas*' or the watch-guards for the proper conclusion of all major religious functions.

5. The earthen lamp called '*Tsong*'. The planets, the Zodiac signs, the sun and the moon, all of them are heavenly bodies. The lamp is, as such, considered as '*Swaprakash*' in the scriptures meaning, 'the light created by ones own self' so as to visualize the heavenly bodies. Hence it is lighted while performing all the rituals and rites.

The main jobs done at the *Hawan Shala* can be described as under: -

a) AgnI Ko>nD (Agni *Kunda*)- the Holy Fire.

The images of Heavenly bodies cited above are made by the "*Kula Guru*' and by his helpers with different coloured lime powders. All these formations are generally geometrical figures with certain artistic insertions as directed by the scriptures. All these give an artistic look. Next the priest starts the decoration of the '*AgnI Ko>nD*' with the help of different coloured lime powders. '*Agni*' has been named as '*Safta Zyavha*' in the scriptures meaning 'having seven tongues' Here it is actually worshipped at nine places. These include the four corners of the main squire, the four mid points on each side of the square and one at the top point The bottom mid point is considered as the '*Ganesha*' and the top most point is known as '*Jwala Ling*:' To the north of the '*Hawan Kund*,' are kept all the ingredients meant for offering to the Holy Fire. Close to it is kept a well-furnished seat meant for the '*TsAndraI Ta:rukh*' or the

head priest. Nearby is placed a cleanly covered small tea-poy, a table lamp and a few bolsters. The head priest keeps his scripture texts, known as '*Pothi*' (*Pu:thi'*) on the tea-poy while reciting from them. A big tub containing the duly washed barley and rice mixed with dry fruits and sesame etc. is kept at a corner to the south of the *Hawan Shala.* A canopy covers the whole area and its interior is decorated with buntings, paintings and portraits of different gods and goddesses. To the front side of the '*Hawan Kund*' are kept the seats for the priests, host/s, groom/s and other visitors who attend the ceremony or have to take part in it. Out side the Hawan Shala and in the space available are laid chairs and tables for all the guests, friends and relatives who are expected to take part in this gathering.

All these jobs are time-consuming and after every job is complete, the *Kula Guru* starts the function with the auspicious blowing of the conch (*Shank).* The earthen lamp is lighted though there might be ample arrangement of electric lights. Incense is burnt. Flowers, milk, curd, ghee, rice, fresh water and utensils of different sizes and shapes required, are brought to the '*Hawan Shala*. The '*TsandrI Ta: rukh,*' (the head priest) opens his '*Pothi*' and starts reciting the '*Kalashi Pu:za:*' paying his salutations to all the deities whose presence is sought on the occasion. The other priest who works as a help to the '*Kula Guru'* acts according to his instructions. In the mean time, the helper prepares the following items out of the '*Kusha*: also known as '*Darbha*' or '*DarIb*' in Kashmiri language,

1. Finger-rings of seven straws of the sacred grass twisted together known as, '*PawethIr*' '*Pawitra*' [1] one each for the use of the host and the groom/s.

[1]. While performing any religious rite, it is worn in the '*Anamica*', the ring finger, as it is consider impure in its absence as per scriptures.

2. Single straw knots of ring type with projections on both the sides, known as '*Ve'shTur*', 50 numbers for: -
   a) 21 numbers known as '*Eka Vimshati Rishin*', a cluster of twenty-one Rishis having a special place at the *Hawan Shala.* These are kept, in a clay pot filled with holy water, to the South of the *Hawan Kunda.*
   b) The remaining are used either at the places of different deities or for sprinkling water etc., on the host/ hostess and the groom/s on the eve of each *Sanskar.*
3. A hand-full. Of 51 straws with a reverse knot at the top, known as '*Brahma*'. It has a special seat in the *Hawn Shalla* atop a clay pot filled with fresh cow-dung.
4 Seven *Darbha* straws knotted at the top, known as 'V*o>pyam,*' '*Upyam*', which is placed on the left ear by the '*Hota*' while performing different rites.

.After adoring the '*Kalsha*' and all other deities for their presence at the *Hawan Shala*, the host and other family members are invited to start the worship of the deities etc. The host is offered a fresh *Yagnyopavita*. Here a small girl performs the '*Zang*' ceremony of the host who is also given vermilion '*Tilak*' on the forehead and a fresh wristband called the '*NA:rivan*'. This process is repeated in respect of all the members of the family who are invited to the *Hawan Shala* and a collective welcome salutation is offered to the deities and gods on this occasion called 'a*:rthi*' it may be pointed out that the host arranges a loud speaker on the occasion for recitation of the Holy Scriptures.

b) *Hum (Hom)* - Kindling of the holy fire.

In the meantime a few young men bring firewood for kindling the Holy Fire. They keep the logs at the fireplace arranged on one another and the fire is kindled amongst chanting of hymns from the scriptures. As soon as the flames are visible, salutations are paid to it by one and all. After completing obeisance to the Sacred Fire, the

following items which are either used on the occasion or provide a means for the completion of the *Sanskar*, are also worshipped by the host: -

I) 'Parohit Pu:za:', after worshipping the Holy Fire, the *Brahamchari* has to pay his reverence to his *Kula Guru* by touching his feet and seeking his blessings.

II) 'Vo>man Ho>ri' Pu:za:', Two long metal ladles used for offering ghee to the holy fire, are called '*Sruk*' and '*Sruv*'. One among the two has a single spoon-like shape at the front tip while the other has two spoon-like depressions. As per the scriptures, the host used to arrange these for his *Kula Guru* on the occasion

III) 'SamidhI Pu:za:' Eleven hundred small mulberry braches measuring not more than 9 inches long which form a part of offerings, are adored on the occasion.

IV) 'Pustak Pu:za:' The *Brahamchari* next pays his salutations to the Holy Scriptures in the form of '*Saraswati*,' the goddess of knowledge and wisdom.

Casting offerings into the Holy Fire is called, '*Hum*' in Kashmiri language. It appears a changed form of '*Homa*' of the Sanskrit language, meaning to burn offerings or a pit like formation on the ground for the Sacred Fire '*Agni.*' Fire is considered the sign of life and light from the times immemorial and the teacher apprises his pupil of this fact at the outset of his educational[1] career. As such, the process of starting the '*Hum*' or offering of different ingredients to the Holy Fire has a special place in our *Sanskars* and it is well described in the *'VanIvun'* or the folk songs. A few lines of the same are as follows: -

Agnai Ko>nDas sAndrIsu: tyo>nglo,
ManglIa:[2] *zangay anA:se'.*
Brahaspat[3] *Go>ran sAndIrasu: tyo>nglo,*

---

[1] Panday, Rajbali, *Hindu Sanaskar, Varanasi*, I, 1960 P. 178.

[2] One of the names attributed to the Mother goddess. Her abode is considered near the village *'Watchi'* of the District *Pulwama*, Kashmir.

[3] Jupiter is considered to be the teacher of gods.

So>bhAdra:[1] *zange' anA:se'.*
Brahama: Juwas ma:ngai[2] *mange',*
Kanyak zange' anA:se'.
VasIdi:v Ra:zas ma:ngai mange', (Kanyak ......)
AgIn SAndra:vu Tsandan lishe',
Ziniche' lIshe' la:gA:se'.
VasIdi:v Ra:zIni Tsandan lIishe',
Brehaspat Go>ro sAndra:vus.
AgIn SAndra:vsu: Tsandan go>ne',
Wanay wa:lus To>lsi:[3] *ka:Th.*

The translation of these lines is as under-

Let the holy fire be kindled in the pit with the help of burning charcoal,
Goddess '*Mangala:*' may perform the 'Zang' ceremony,
Jupiter - the teacher (of the gods), kindled the fire with the help of burning charcoal,
Subhadra may perform the *'Zang'* ceremony.
Let *Brahma* be approached repeatedly,
Ask an unmarried girl to perform the '*Zang*' ceremony.
Let king *Vasudeva* be begged repeatedly,
Ask an unmarried ....
Kindle the fire with the help of Sandalwood pieces,
Then apply small pieces of firewood.
With the Sandalwood pieces from king *Vasudeva,*
Oh: Priest *Brihaspati,* you kindle it.
Kindle the fire in the heap of Sandalwood,
Go and fetch the dry Basil branches from the forest.

---

[1] Subhadra is the sister of Lord Krishna, she was married to Arjuna, the son of Pandu of the great Epic, Mahabharata.

2 .Ma:ngay', wages paid in kind to different professionals in the past.

[3] The famous *Ayurvedic* medicinal plant ' Basil'. It is considered as a holy plant according to the Indian mythology.

C). Social gatherings

The process of pre-birth and post–birth *Sanakars* that we have already discussed in detail and which include the religious, social and ritualistic aspects as well, start just after the Holy Fire is kindled. Besides, we have also discussed the philosophical and religious background of this *Sanskar*, '*Upanayana*'. Therefore, here onwards we will discuss the ritualistic and social functions connected with this *Sanskar*.

The following functions connected with the celebrations of this *Sanskar* invite much attention as the host, hostess, a number of close relatives, photographers and the video camera men, all remain busy when these functions of social and cultural values are initiated. A few of these are described hereunder: -

1.KalIvAlini BA:gra:wIni-Distributing the headgears

The word '*KalIvAlyun*' comprises two Kashmiri words. '*KalI*', means 'head' and '*VAlyun*' meaning 'a covering' or 'a gear'. Previously the Kashmiri ladies had a peculiar head dress comprising; a round cap with golden or silver brocade top, a lining of white cotton ribbon with a number of wrappings around the border of the main cap that was covered with a transparent material called '*Shi:shi La:Th*'. The brocade top of the cap was partially covered with a small piece of cloth with a brocade lining on the length sides, called '*Zu:ji*' and over it was placed a long piece of a thin muslin cloth called '*Pu:ts*', rolled in at the two length-sides giving it a snake-like shape, reminding us of the impact of *Naga* civilization and culture on Kashmir. This headgear was called '*TarangI*'. Besides all the accessories, a new long outer gown, called '*Pheran*' along with an inner cotton gown as a lining, called '*Po<tsh*' was given by the hostess to each aunt of the groom and the list included his maternal and paternal

aunties also. Now a suit of *Sari* along with an *'ATIho>r* is offered to each lady of the family due to the change in the dress code. In addition to this the host, his parents and close relations get a suit of clothing, like shirts etc. as present on the occasion. Needless to say that a new suit of clothing and a towel are given to the *Kula Guru* and his helper at the time of dressing up the groom for the ceremony. Burning of 'Niger', the busy schedule of photographers/ video men and sounds of greetings like '*Mubarakh*' and '*PoshtI*' are main attractions of the hour. The folk song about the time of binding of the headgear, '*TarangI*' is as follows: -

DanDakhvan[1] *KhAtsIkhay NA:ri: NA:ri:,*
BAji Byni HA:ri: Taranga: ganD. (DanDakhvan,)
RIkhImAni[2] *MA:li: Taranga: ganD.*

Its translation is under: -

You ascended the '*DanDakhvan*' through the ridges,
Oh! Eldest sister, you please bind the headgear.
You have climbed the *DanDakhvan*' through the narrow ridges,
Oh! Revered *Raukhamani,* you please bind the headgear now.

The folk song continues for a long time and the names of the host, hostess and other elderly members of the family are inserted in it instead of the mythological names cited above.

2. *NA:rivan Kha:rIni* - Binding of the hair plates

Binding of the hair of the hostess and of other female family members of her *Gotra* into two plaits with the '*NA:rivan*', a raw cotton thread of red colour used as

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[1]Lord Rama spent fourteen years of exile in forests known as the *DanDakvan.* It is a mountain range in south India. A forest area in Handwara, Kashmir, is also known by this name.

[2] Raukhamani the spouse of Lord Krishna. This name is given to the hostess at this special occasion.

the wristband on all auspicious occasions, has already been discussed under the headings '*Bijwapan*'.

On the eve of binding the hair locks with the '*NA:rivan*' the following folk song is sung by the ladies: -

Away anithay NnA:rivan thA:ji: :,[1]
Sha:ba:sh Sha:rada: MA:ji:ye.
Ku:r chakh Dakhi Praza:patIni:ye:[2]
Hi:ma:l Parbatas kArthay attay,
DivIki: MA:ji: kArthay attay'
Ku:r chakh Divakh[3] *Ra:zA:ni: .*
KrishnI JuwIne' zyanay tsAjiye' gatay,
Ku:r chakh Lautay Ra:zA:ni:[4]
DanDakhvan khas Ra:zay BA:yi:,
Di:vI RA:yis[5] *mang NA:ri:van.*
TsandInuk hang ganD HangI To>mA:ri:,
Ba:l wAtsh da:r[6] *Kha:rI nA:ri:van.*
VasIdi:v Ra:zIni Antai[7] *MA:li:,*
DA:ntIni sI:ti kha:r NA:ri:van.
VasIdi:v RazIni Va:nyani' ku:ri:,
KA:ni:[8] *pyeTh kha:r NnA:ri:van.*
Sha:ba:sh tas ma:ji yas ma:ji za:yakh
A:yakh tI kA:rith NA:ri:van.
Bhishmakh[9] *Ra:zIni ga:TIji ku:ri,*

---

1 A bigger form of '*Tha:l*' or '*Tha:li*' - a big plate.

2 A famous character of '*Shiva Pura*:na', the father of *Parwati*, (the spouse of *Shiva*,) who was destroyed by *Shiva* himself for his impertinence.

3. This appears to be either the father of '*Devaki*', the spouse of '*Vasudeva*' of the *Mahabharta* or the famous king of Kashmir known as *Deva Sahi*. *Khingla* alias *Narendra Ditya*, the son of Huna ruler *Gokarna*. Who ruled Kashmir in the sixth century A.D. P.S., The History Kashmir by P. N. K. Bamzai, 1973, P. 79.

4 This probably is the name of Lord Lytton, the Viceroy of Kashmir during the reign of Maharaja *Pratap Singh*. P S.. *History of Kashmir*, by P. N. K, Bamzai, 1973, P. 678.

5 Probably it is the name of *Deva Sarman*, the Chief Minister of *Jayapida* alias *Vinayaditya*. P.S., *History of Kashmir*, P.N.K. Bamzai, 1973, P.126.

6 The front (gate) side of the house, known as '*da:r*'.

7 Derived from the root Sanskrit word, '*Anta*' meaning a pregnant lady.

8 The upper most story of a house, called '*KA:ni:*'.

9 The most famous and powerful Chief Minister of Kuta *Rani*, named *Bhikshana Bhatta*, who was treacherously killed by *Shah Mir* in cold blood. (P.s. *History of Kashmir* by P.N. K. Bamzai, 1973, p.s. 172,314).

Pa:sIki' khA:rith NA:ri:van.
Di:vakh Ra:zIni Po>khtai kA:ri:,
Mo>khtIki' kA:rith NA:ri:van.
Di:vakh Ra:zIni kori Ko>mA:ri,
HA:ri:[1] *khA:rith NA:ri:van.*
Bhishmakh Ra:zIni' asIvIni' ku:ri:
Prasnay khA:rith NA:ri:van.[2]
Do>has manzIy ko>h tI ba:l tshAnDithay,
Taway gAnDithay NA:ri:van.
Bhishmakh Ra:zIni' da:yakh[3] *ku:ri:*
NA:ri:vanan cha:yak chuy.

In the beginning of these lines there is a reference to '*Sha:rada:*', which clearly denotes its ancient origin.

The translation of these lines is as under: -

Have you brought a large plate containing the '*NA:rivan*' for this very purpose?
Well done, mother *Sha:rada:*, the goddess of wisdom and learning.
You have lifted the mountain *Himalaya* on your back,
You are the daughter of *Dakshi Prajapati,*
Oh mother *Devaki*, you have arranged (all this) single-handed
You are the daughter of king *Devaka (Deva Sahi).*
The darkness has vanished due to the birth of Lord *Krishna*,
You are the daughter of *Lord Lytton.*
Oh sweetheart, you please ride the '*DanDakh-vana*' forests,
And ask the great philosopher *Deva Sarman.*
to offer you the *NA:rivan.*

---

1 Merle or sparrow likes bird known for its beauty, cleanliness and good habits.

2 A recently married lady who has not yet attained mother-hood. Her '*NA:rivan Kha:rIni*' putting on the hair bands on the occasion, is considered auspicious.

3 A lady who is full of wisdom and can give good advice

Oh lady of splendid beauty and height, adjust your headgear with a piece of sandal-wood,
The young lady has gone to the front door for adjusting her '*NA:rivan*'.
Oh pregnant and loving spouse of king *Vasudeva,*
You put on your ' NA:rivan' with a dentifrice.
Oh splendid daughter of king *Vasudeva*,
You put on your '*NA:rivan*' on the upper story of the house.
Worth praise is the mother, who gave birth to thee,
You have put on the '*NA:rivan*' just on your arrival.
Oh wise daughter of great *Bhikshna Bhatta*,
You have put on the '*NA:rivan*' made of pure gold.
Oh matured lady of king *Devaka, (Deva Shahi),*
You have put on the *NA:rivan* made of pearls.
Oh unmarried daughter of king *Devaka*,
Oh sweat-heart you have put on the *NA:rivan.*
Oh smiling nymph of king *Bhishmaka (Bikshana Bhatta),*
You have put on the *NA:rivan* before your attaining the mother-hood.
You have made a search in all the forests and mountains in a single day,
It is because of this that you have bound the '*NA:rivan*.
Oh wise and counseling daughter of king *Bhishmaka,*
I welcome your *NA:rivan.*

3. *Distribution of the* 'Tyeki' ta:lI' – Decoration of the headgear

Distribution of a pentagon shaped paper and pasted with multi coloured shining piece of paper is the next function of the hour. Each lady of the family of the same clan or '*Gotra*', the maternal and the paternal aunts are given this piece of paper, which they fasten to their upper muslin cloth of the headgear or on the '*Sari*' at the border covering the head. Previously a pentagon figure containing the symbols of *Ganesh, a Swastika* and the letter '*Om*' was marked on the head side of the outer muslin cloth with henna and vermilion by the *Kula Guru.* It now being available in the market in the ready-made form, the hostess keeps them in stock according to her requirements. Leaving its ritualistic aspect aside, it gives a distinct and a respectable look to all the hostesses among all the relatives present. One can easily point out the ladies connected with the family more closely and belonging to the same '*Gotra*' or family. Probably it appears to be a sign of respect, which the society has given to the ladies on such special functions of joy [1]. The folk songs or '*VanIvun*' of the occasion include a number of mythological names, the joy expressed by the hostess, social customs of reciprocal nature in the form of cash presents, the excitement and cheerfulness felt by the ladies of the family on this joyous function, are contained in it. A few such couplets of the '*VanIvun*' are quoted here: -

Te'ki' Pu:tsi Te'nDi' mA:nz chiti nAri'va:ran, [2]

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[1] The '*Tyaki' Ta:l'* is offered to each lady of the family on Divgo>n held on the eve of the marriage of a boy or girl, besides the *Yagnyopavita* Sanskar.

[2] Front sleeves of a long gown '*Pheran*' bordered with bright coloured chintz cloth worn by the ladies whose husbands are living. Widows do wear a 'Pheran' but without such a lining.

Ya:yimas chakh kara:n lo>lImatI la:y.
Te'ki' Pu:tsi cha:ne' pyaThI kinA:ri:,
Talai Van HA:ri: NA:ri:van ha:v.
DivIki: ma:je' pyaThI kinA:ri:,
Mo>khtI chus DalIvun tI So>n shola:n.
KrishnIni Me'khali gAnDIth SardA:ri:,
Talai Van HA;ri: ......
Te'ki' Pu:tsi cha:ne' Aratali vAthIr[1]
Mye'thIr a: ye' Gulimyu:Th[2] *karA:ne'.*
DivIki: ma:je' Aratali vAthIr,
ShAthIr payinay khoran tal.
PoshtI MA:ji: poshtI chuye',
Shola:n du:ran tI zA:li jumkan.
Cha:yakh mA:ji: cha:yakh chuye',
No>sh chakh HarI ChAndra:zA:ni:[3]

The translation of these lines is as under: -
The upper muslin of the headgear is marked with vermilion and finger print specks of henna,
And the front sleeves are decorated with the chintz cloth
Oh! hostess, you are busy with your chorus,
Your vermilion printed muslin of the headgear has a lining,
Oh! Wild merle please show us your *NA:rivan*,
There is a lining over mother *Devaki* also,
The gold of her pendent earrings is glittering and the pearls are shaking,
She has got all this superiority due to the *Mekhala* of *Krishna* (Oh! wild merle, ...)

---

[1] A design in embroidery work, a leaf with eight corners, commonly used in such designs. A mystical figure known as '*AshTI dal*'.

[2] '*Gul*' is the Persian word meaning 'flower'; or 'hand' and '*Myu:Th*' means 'Kiss'. The conjugated word means, 'appreciation'. Here it denotes the cash payment/ money, which the relatives.and others present to the host/ hostess on the occasions like marriages etc.

[3] The legendry king *Harish Chandra* of the Indian mythology famous for his charity and truthfulness.

Your headgear muslin has a vermilion leaf with eight corners.
The friends have come with cash presents,
Mother *Deviki* has a eight cornered leaf,
May her foes prostrate at her feet
Salutations are to you welcome mother,
Your frilly earrings are glittering.
Salutations are due to you O worthy mother,
You are the daughter-in-law of King *Harish Chandra.*

d). Mekhala: sanskar and the folk songs

In the mean time the groom is helped by his paternal/maternal uncle/s in getting his hair shaved by the barber commonly known as '*Chudakar*', '*ZarI Ka:say*' or' *Mundan*' which is the pre-requisite for the *Mekhala Sanskar* and thereafter the *Brhamchari* takes his bath. The *VanIvun* of the occasion gives a vivid picture of this hour in the following lines: -

Tani kAmi la:jiyo Pe'tran tI Ma:man,
Ju:man chay po>t ze'ybA:yi:,
PatI bronThI vuchiyo VasIdi:v Ra:zan,
Ma:man kho<rkho ko>che' ke'th.
Ya:rIbalI khA:sith Go>ras nishi tsa:kho,
Za:kho Yendre'yi[1] *kore' nish.*
Ya:rIbalI khA:sith Pamposh prA:vitho,
NA:vtho Gangay zallai[2] *tan,*
Wufi aki kotur[3] *kuThi byu:Thu:kho*
Dayi Dyu:Thu:kho bha:ge'wa:n.
MA:lis tI Go>ras nishi byu:Thu:kho,
Asi Dyu:Thu:kho bhage'va:n.
MA:lis khovIri Go>ras dAchini,

[1] The daughter of god 'Indra', the head of all the gods , a nymph.
[2] The water of river Ganga is considered most pious and holy according to the Indian ethos.
[3] It is a mark of faithfulness, obedience and simplicity.

Vo>ni'tsay rAchinay Na:ra:yan.
MahAniv su:zitav VeshikarIm cha:nas[1]
Krishnas kyut ani tshA:rith ja:n .
Translation:
Who helped you to wear the ceremonial clothes?
It was the maternal and the paternal uncles.
From the back looks, the clothes appear decent.
King *Vasudeva* looked after you more carefully.
Your maternal uncle brought you here in his lap.
You came before your *Guru* after your return from the bathing place.
You are born of the daughter of god Indra.
You have attained the look of a lotus after your return from the riverbank,
You have washed your body with the water of the river Ganga.
You came flying like a pigeon and sat in the room.
The Almighty considered you as the most fortunate one.
You sat close to your father and the *Guru*.
We have considered you as the luckiest one.
Father is to your right and the *Guru* is to your left.
May God '*Narayan*' save you from now onwards?
Go and send a messenger to the carpenter. '*Vishvakarma*'[2]
He may choose a good (dwelling) for Lord *Krishna*.

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[1] According the Indian mythology. 'Vishvakarma:' is the famous Engineer of the gods

[2] The word carries a hidden meaning of giving an idea to the boy to make him understand that the days of struggle for maintaining a separate family are ahead for which purpose he would require the services of a mason/carpenter.

9. *Yoni Tra:vun :* **Mekhala Sanskar**

Once the hair-cutting and bathing of the groom/s is over, he is brought to the *Hawan Shala* by his maternal/ paternal uncle, because the horal moment of wearing the Holy Thread is fixed and can not be altered. Here the groom/s and all the members of the family are served '*PanchI gavya*' by the *Kula Guru* for their purification. After this the groom/s is/are directed to wear the ceremonial dress specially got prepared for the occasion. This includes: -

1. A yellow coloured long gown without any stitches on its borders and neck called, ' *Mekhali potsh* '
2. A yellow coloured cap that covers the ears and extends up to the neck, named as, '*KanI Khu:li*' .
3. '*Darbi Raz*'- a three-fold rope made of '*Kusha*' used as the belt.
4. '*Mriga:zan*'- The skin of a deer used as a bag/ sheild.
5 A lions-cloth, called '*ShranI PaTh*' and a cotton belt, called '*A:Ti'pan*'.
6. '*Pawitra*'- A knotted round ring made of 'Kusha' worn in the ring finger at the time of performing any religious rite.
7. A set of *Yagnyopavita* dyed in yellow colour - one to be cast by the *Kula Guru* and the other to be cast by the father/grand father.
8. A metal Tha:li (with a walnut and a little curd in it) for receiving alms, called '*Abi:di Tha:l*', and
9. '*Dandam*' – A stick of 'Plash' or mulberry tree for self-protection.

The groom wears the ceremonial dress amid recitations of hymns by the *Kula Guru* at the *Hawan Shala* and this is the hour of great pomp and show. All the guests, relatives, friends and neighbours attend this spectacular show. The photographers, video camera men,

burning of 'Niger' congratulations to the host and the hostess, the occasional high tone of the conch shell, the loud recitations by the *Kula Guru* and other priests, and '*VanIvun*' of the ladies, are the special features of the hour. The main functions that follow are as under: -

a). Vidyarambha Introducing the Alphabet

The ceremonially dressed boy is called the *Brhamchari* and he is introduced to the written alphabet, known as '*Vidyarambha*' on a slate or paper. Previously it was done on a wooden slab, called '*du:ji*'. Blue clay soaked in water, was used for writing on it with a hollow-reed pen known as '*NarkA:ni*' *Kalam*'. Now a days we see that this *Sanskar* serves as a pre-requisite of the marriage ceremony and the boy who is asked to display all such rituals including the introduction of the first alphabet known as the '*Vidyarambha*', appears just an artifact only. But if we ponder a bit deeper into the over all meaning of the words which the *Brhamchari* is asked to write three times on the occasion, we see that it has a deeper significance and meaning than the words carry. The words which he is asked to write are: '*Om Swasti Siddham*', pronounced by the *Kula Guru* in the typical *Sha:rada* phonetic order evolved by the then scholars of *Sha:rada* script for written Kashmiri language. The narration is repeated like this, '*Wo>ma wom, Swo>yam so, Te'wis te', Se'dav se', damar dham - Om Swasti Siddham*', and the *Brhamchari* repeats all of it in the same phonetic order, three times. The meaning of these words is, 'May the Ultimate Truth bring welfare and happiness (by bestowing) success, and fulfillment and thus satisfaction.' to the bearer. According to the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the first sound caused at the time of the creation of this universe is '*Om*', which took the

magnanimous form [1] in due course of development. It is also considered as the ultimate end of this universe and it transcends itself with *'Sa:dhana'*. It is a means to understand the Truth that is beyond articulation, reasoning and thinking. The question arises, 'Why is *Sa:dhana* required?' The answer is that everyone wants to become successful in life. No body wants to lead a meaningless or unsuccessful life. The highest philosophy of success is to achieve the state of Awareness. Those who are aware are successful, whereas those who remain engrossed with the mundane are always unsuccessful in life. Successful people are always guided by their awareness and they never get engrossed with life. An engrossed person is not able to assess any situation correctly, so he fails to take appropriate and timely decision. In the wake of deep infatuation, his discretionary consciousness and intellect become so clouded that he cannot take proper decisions in life. His 'third' eye remains closed because of the dense layers of illusion and ignorance. The philosophy for successful life is to attain the state of Awareness. So the highest aim of ones life is to attain it. A man who is not aware can never achieve satisfaction and Awareness involves education. Hence, the *Brhamchari* requires the benedictions of a teacher or *'Guru'*

b). Yagnyopatita* by the *Kula Guru.

After the completion of the '*Vidyarambha*', the *Kula Guru* first of all casts the *Yagnyopavita* to the boy/s before the Holy Fire. Then a Saffron *Tilak* is put on his forehead, from the tip of his nose up to the tonsure through his hairline on the forehead. On all these occasions listed above, a young girl is asked to perform the '*Zang*' ceremony of the groom as a gesture of good omen. The *Yagnyopavita* cast to the boy by the *Kula Guru* means that the *Brhamchari* has to follow certain codes of conduct. These are: -

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1 Bhatt, Pt. Kashav , *Mekhala Pustak*, '*Swastyayanam*', 1925, p. 1.

1. a:tsIman : The rinsing of the mouth with water before taking food on an auspicious or on a fasting day.

2. Placing the right foot on the stone pestle, *'Ka:jwaTh'*, the boy confirms that his mind and heart shall remain as strong as the stone pestle, and on this the *Guru*, the incarnation of *Brihaspati*, blesses him saying, 'Let your heart be as strong and the mind be as luminous as mine; let your words attain the perfection of '*Brihaspati*'. He touches the chest, of the boy with his right hand called, *'Hriday Sparash'* The *Brhamchari*, touching his feet requests the *Kula Guru* to convey to him the codes of conduct which the *Guru* explains to him after serving three spoons-full of curd, three times. The *Brhamchari* is told the following codes of conduct: -

1. The three codes of self-restrain: -
a). *Yam* - Restraint from passion,
b).*Niyam* –Observance of right conduct, and
c) *Nirwan* – Salvation.

2). 'Gayatri Mantra, Utterance and adoption of the *'Ga:yitry ManthIr'* into the right ear of the *Brhamchari,* three times,

3). 'A:Tipan' Tying an inner loin cord called, '*A:Tipan*' made of three-fold cotton strings, and

4).Darbi Raz' Tying of an outer belt with a three fold rope made of *Kusha* grass,[1].

All these items have number 'three' in common, which clearly shows the three-fold life-code to be adopted by a *Brhamchari*. These further strengthen the codes of self-restrain as mentioned at S.No: 1 above.

Finally the *Guru* gives the boy '*Mrigazan*', the skin of a deer to wear. This serves as a symbol of a bag or

1. Three kinds of belts are prescribed for *Brhamcharis'* of different castes: a) A three-fold rope of *'Darbha:'* for a Brahamin, b) The string used in the bow called, *'Pratyancha'* for a *Kshatriya*, and, c) Cotton rope for a *Vaisha*. (see *Mekhala Pustak* by Pt., Kesho Bhatt, 1925 , Page 63. Also see *Hindu Sanskar* by Rajbali Randay, 1960, P. 179.)

as a shield to him for collecting alms/self protection for day-to-day survival as a *Brhamchari*. The *`Brahma Sutras'*, however clearly say that the greatest wealth of a *Brahmin* is charity [1]

C). *Yagnyopavita* by the parents:

Taking the '*Mulberry'* or the '*Plasha*' stick, called '*Dandam*'in his right hand and the '*Abi:di Tha:l'* for collection of alms in his left hand, the *Brhamachari* is brought to the southeast corner of the *Hawan Kunda*. Facing towards the western direction, the '*Masi' 'Ma:s,'* (mother's sister} is directed by the scriptures to first initiate the offerings of the alms, '*Abi:d'* to the boy and after completing this ritual, the father or the grand-father is directed to cast the Holy Thread to boy/s after performing the '*Zang'*, ceremony. The crowd present on the occasion claps. The video filmmakers and the photographers take a sigh of relief after a long pause of hectic business. The sweet smell of the burning the 'Niger' makes the whole atmosphere fragrant. Every body congratulates the host and the hostess. The people present at the *'Hawan Shala'* hug and kiss the groom one by one and bless him. All the people assembled there start leaving the '*Hawan Shala*' to attend to other jobs. All these celebrations are performed according to the scriptures and with great devotion and on the lines as directed in the *Vedic* hymns. Here ends the ritualistic portion of this particular function though the offerings of ingredients to the Holy Fire continue for the whole day according to the directives of the Holy Scriptures. Thus we complete a few additional *Sanskars* on this eve, an account of which will follow.

Before taking up the ritualistic aspects connected with the main function, '*Mekhala*:' it is in the fitness of

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1 *'Brahamnasya Dhanam Biksha:, Kashetrayasya Dhanur Dhanam, Vaishasya Krishir Vanijayam'*, Bhatt. pt., Kesho, *Mekhala Pustak, 'Upayanam*, 1925, P. 69

things to discuss the social and community related praxis highlighted in the folk songs connected with different aspects of this main function.

On the arrival of the boy in the '*Hawan Shala*,' after his bathing, he is introduced to the alphabet first, called the '*Vidyarambh*'. Our folk songs give a graphic description of the function in the following lines: -

Krishen go>am tsa:TIha:l[1] *DivIki: zu:ji'*[2] *a:lvInas*
Hachi hund po<rud[3] *mye'tsi sA:ti' bArize',*
Ongji sA:ti' li:khize' Wo>ma: wom.[4]
So>nI sInz du:ji' tai Ro>pI sIndi kalImo,
Go>Dnyuk achur chuy Wo>ma: Wom.
VasIdi:v Ra:zIni so>nI sIndi kalImo,
KrishnI Juvan lyu:khnam Wo>ma Wom.
So>nI doji pyaThly ro>pI sund kalImo,
Do>yim achur chuy So>yam So.
Wo>ma: Wom So>yam So Tyvis te' pArize',
Dya:nI kin so>rize' Shri Ra:mun.
Vidya:rambas kunuy pA:thIr.
Nu:n VAr tai be'yi MohrI pra:s.
Brahma: Jiyas ma:gay mange',
Kanyakh zange' anA:se'.

The translation of these lines is given below: -

Krishna went to the school with a small board (*Patti, 'du:ji'*) in his hand.
Devaki circulated the inner muslin of her headgear '*Zu:ji'*', over him.[5]

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[1] Known as school or '*Pathshala*', in Hindi and in other Indian language.

[2] The inner short muslin cloth, embroidered on two longer sides covering the headgear.

[3] A wooden slate called '*Dhu:ji.*' or '*Mashikh*' was previously used by the beginners for writing. Special blue clay called. '*Syaf*', was used to write on it with a hollow-reed pen, '*NarIkAni Qaklam.*'.

[4] It is the Kashmiri phoneme for '*Om*'.

[5] It is believed that by encircling the '*zu:ji'*' over the head of the boy, he is saved from the evil and witch-craft.

The wooden slate should be smeared with clay dust.
and you should write '*Wo>ma: Wom*' the first letter
with your fingertip on it.
The slate is golden and the pen is made of silver,
The first letter is '*Wo>ma: Wom*'.
Oh golden pen of king *Vasudeva,*
Lord *Krishna* has written '*Wo>ma: Wom*',
On the golden slate with the silver pen,
The second letter is '*So>yam So*'.
You should read '*Wo>ma wom, syo>m so, tyavis Te*',
You should adore Shri *Rama* in your inner heart.
Vidyarambha invites just,
Some salt, '*VAr*' and a pure golden coin.
Let us approach the '*Brahama*' to direct,
A small girl to perform the '*Zang*' ceremony.

Next comes the function of putting the Saffron '*Tilak*' on the fore-head of the groom and this has rightly been described in the folk lore or the '*VanIvun*' of this specific hour in the following words: -

Da:to[1] *karsu: ta:baydA:ri, Goro*[2] *la:gus she:re' posh,*
VasIdi:v Ra:zIni' guri' gand ba:gas,
Badi BrahmanI kar Da:tas tyo>k

The translation of these lines is as under: -
Oh benefactor, you express your obedience,
Oh Guru, you put flowers on his forehead.
Go and tie the horses of *Vasudeva* in the garden.
Oh senior *Brahmin*, you put the mark on his forehead.

It is followed with tying of the *NA:rivan* on the right wrist of the groom. The ritual too is covered in our folk songs in the following manner: -

Tsa:Tho karsu: ta:baydA:ri:, Goro ganDsu: NA:ri:van.
DyakI prazlyoyo Ttyo>k wo>zlyoyo,

---

[1] The root word '*Data*' meaning ' the giver.' The host is the giver on the function.

[2] The distorted form of '*Guru.*'

Mo>luluy gAnDizyas KA:kni [1] *band*

The translation of these lines is as under; -

Oh pupil you remain in complete obedience.
Oh teacher you tie him the *NA:rivan.*
Your forehead has flushed and the mark of *'Tilak'* has become redder.
You might put a costly/ golden band on his wrist.

The priest sprays a little of Holy Water on both i.e., The boy and the host so as to further purify them and prepare them for the occasion. Touching the feet of the priest by the *Brhamchari* on this occasion, is contained in the following words: -

Kho<ran lavI dyu: zapI ke' zorai,
Goro wandIyou pa:dan rath.
LavI dyu: kho<ran tI bayyi chikI she'ras,
NakhI chukh Goran tai PAnDitan.
A:dInIki kolo [2] *lavI dyu: kho<ran,*
Goran sA:ti kar shokI ma:n ma:n.

It is translated as under :-

You sprinkle water on your feet with the force of penance,
Oh! *Brahamna*, I shall swear your feet with my blood (shall perform complete obedience).
You sprinkle the Holy Water on your feet and head.
For you are near the *Brahmins* and the most qualified.
Oh first offshoot of the family, come briskly and spray your feet with Holy Water,
You compete with these *Brahmins* out of your own volition.

Wearing '*Mrigazan*' is contained in the following folk songs : -

Lolay Pu:tis Mriga:zan nA:li:,
MA:li: tro<vnas kinI BrahmAni'?

---

1 Wrist ornament made of gold, '*Kanak*'. Probably the rich people may have had the practice of wearing golden wrists-bands on the occasion.

2 An address of annoyance /order for a young boy by an elderly person.

VsIdi:v Ra:zIni za:fal zanDo
TshA:gis trovhai Brahmay ganD

The translation is :-

The dear son is wearing a '*Mrigazan*' (a deer skin).
Has it been put on him by his father or the *Brahmins*?
Oh you nutmeg - bush of king *Vasudeva*,
Your sacred tuft of hair has been given a sacred knot.

Then comes the turn of binding the three-fold rope made of '*Kusha*' grass and we hear the following folk song on the occasion: -

Nyamith tI gonDhay darbe' Dyu:nThuy
Samith tI devta: sonuy A:y
KrishnI Mahara:Jas Darbe' Dyu:nThuy
YAtshith tI ShivI Ji sonuy A:v

The translation of these lines is as under :-

While bending, a knot of '*Kusha*', was made around your waist,
All the gods have assembled in our house.
A knot of *Kusha* has been fastened to *Krishna*
Lord *Shiva* has come to our house of his own.

While tying the lions-cord *(A:Tipan)* the following lines are sung:-

Ko>ngas tI syandIre' wo>thIyo brotuy.
Brahmanan pilvunas A:ti:pan.

Translation: -

The Saffron and vermilion has trickled down (on the fore-head),
The *Brahman* has extended the cotton lions-cord *(A:tipan)* to you.

At the time of fastening the under garment with the loin-cord made of cotton, we come across the following couplets of the folk-song: -

Dayi sund darIm tai YAndrI sund dya:nIy.
Brahmnan pilvunas shra:nay paTh.
Krishnas Yoni vo<t YendrIne' dyanay.
Brihaspath la:gyas shra:nay paTh.

Translation :-
With the blessings and grace of Indra and God.
The *Brahmin* has extended to him the under garment.
The auspicious hour of *Krishna*'s Holy Thread Ceremony has come with the blessings of lord Indra,
Jupiter, the teacher of the gods, shall put the under garment on the boy.

At the time of rinsing the mouth with a little water *(a:tsman)* and at the time of serving the '*Panchagavya*' a mixture of five holy ingredients, the following folk song is sung: -

VasIdi:v Ra:zíni krenkay go>bro,
So>nI wa:ji sA:ti kar a:tsayman,
Guh gyav do>d grumyut na:bad so>mbrith,
AmryatI[1] *sA:ti kar a:tsayman.*

Translation: -
Oh gem-like son of king Vasudeva,
Rinse your mouth with the water touched by you with your golden ring.
Blending cow-dung/urine, ghee, milk, and sugar candy,
You rinse your mouth with the Nectar.

The following lines are sung while adoring the '*Samidha* [2] 'mulberry sticks' that are used either as *DanDam* or fuel: -

KrishnI Mahara:jini' So>bAdra: beniye',

---

[1] 'Nectar', of the Indian mythology. The five ingredients received from a cow i.e., milk, curd, ghee, urine of a small calf that has not yet tasted grass and sugar canday. '*Gavya*', is a Sanaskrit word and means, 'from cow'. A mixture of all these five things is called '*Pancha Gavya*'; it is considered as good a purifier as Nectar, when prepared according to the scriptures.

[2] The root Sanskrit word is *Samidha*' meaning fire. The '*Samidl*'- small sticks (1100 in total) and a long one, one for each boy, known as '*DanDam*', is either made from *Plasha* or mulberry tree. The sticks are rubbed with butter as contained in the scriptures. It is believed that a stick treated in oil, ghee or butter makes it strong and easy to handle.

Samidan thaniye' mA:lA:se'.
Va:sIdi:v Ra:zIni La:lI tI Du:ro,
Athan samidI mu:rIy chai.
The translation is :-
O! Subhadra, the sister of king *Krishna,*
You rub butter to the mulberry sticks.
O! the most dear and the 'pearl' of king *Vasudeva,*
You have got a stick of mulberry tree in your hand.

The invitation is extended to all the gods and deities to attend the function and this fact is recorded in our folk songs: -

HumI She'chi' ladIha: Maha: Rodras[1] *tai*
Gatshtay mo>hniv dorA:vi'to<s.
Brahmay Lu:kIkis [2] *Brahma: Jiyas*
Tas pazihe' yo>t va:to<nuy.
Mekhali pazihas tan dini asitai, (Gastay...)
KA:ḷa:sI pyaThIkis ShivI Na:thas tai,
Shu:bihe' Mekhali pyaTh wa:tun yo<r.
Humas pyaTh pazihyas Vi:d vanun tai,(Gatshtay..)
YAndreyi lu:kIkis YAndra:zas tai
Pazihe' yami gari yo>r va:tun
Na:na: rAngi po<sh tAmi' Da:li su:zi'nas tai, (Gatsh)
GAgnI pAki' DivIta: Bhu:mi pAki' sA:ri:,
Krishnas vA:tsh Mekhali vA:ri:ye'.

Translation:-
Go and inform Lord Shiva about this great '*Hom*' (Holy Fire)
Go and depute a messenger to inform him.
Brahma, whose abode is in *Brahma Loka?*
He should have come to this place,
He should have helped us in this *Mekhala* of ours,
Go and depute ......

---

[1] A name attributed to Lord *Shiva.*

[2] One of the three loka:s – *Vishnu Loka, Shiv Loka* and *Brahma Loka*. This one is attributed to '*Brahma*' according to the Indian mythology.

The Shiva, whose abode is on the great *Kailasha* [1]
He should have attended this *Mekhala:*
He should have recited the *Vedas* on this *Hom, (Go..*
Indira of the *Indra Loka* (Heavens),
He should have arrived to this place at this hour
He has sent multi-coloured flowers as a gift (Go..)
The gods passed through the Heavens and all walked on earth,
It is time for the Holy Thread Ceremony of *Kriśhna,*

The time of wearing the Holy Thread is considered as the most important occasion among all the rituals of the hour and this has received a well-deserved attention in our folk songs recorded bellow: -

Yiyiv ma:li Brahmnav khAsiv sa:ni he're',
LA:giv ma:li tyo>k posh arIg [2] *she're',*
So>rI ro<z Yonich gAr yuthnI ne're', (LA:giv ma;li..)
Ru:hini: [3] *chi pra:ra:n tsAndramI ne're',*
Yiyiva ma:li Brahmnav gAtshiv ma:li Jama:h,
Kariv ma:li humuk sama:cha:r [4].
Trika:ran [5] *Maharshi: a:yi yath sa:tas,*
Do<has bo<zni tsatur Vi:d [6].
Brahama: Ji: a:v Azikis sa:tas,

---

[1] The famous *Kailasha ,a* peak of the *Himalayan Mountain Range,*

[2] Whole grain of rice soaked in water. It is used in religious ceremonies along with flowers.

[3] Out of the twenty-seven lunar mansions *(Nakshetras)*, *Rohini Nakshetra* is reserved for holding *Mekhala Sanskara*. It is also considered as the spouse of *Chandra Deva* (Moon) according to the Indian mythology.

[4] It appears a conjugation of '*sam*' and '*a:cha:r*', meaning, a collective action.

[5] Three forces: 1. *Brahma*, (the Creator), 2. *Vishnu,* (the Preserver). and 3. *Shiva*, (the Destroyer).
Three timings: 1. Morning, 2. Noon, and 3. Evening.
Three time spans: 1. Present, 2. Past, and 3. Future.
Three aims of life: 1. Love, 2. Duty, and 3. Wealth. Or
1. Gain, 2. Equality, and 3. Loss.
Three castes : 1. *Brahmin*, 2. *Kshetriy*, and 3, *Vaish.*
A confluence of the three major rivers of India, 1. *Ganga*, 2. *Yamuna*, and 3. *Saraswati.*

[6] The Four Vedas, 1. *Rgved*, 2. *Atharvaved,* 3. *Samved*, and 4. *Yajurved.*

Ve'shin tI ShivI Ji: sA:ti: hyath,
Sa:vitri:[1] *hyath ne'ri sa:yam ka:las,*
RavI a:v bovnas tsho>h a:v Ko>ngas,
Sanz lo>g Mekhala: ta:rA:nas.
Agnuk dIh kho>t gAgnIchi ra:shye',
KA:shi:[2] *Andriuk Brahma: a:v.*
Swo> manI kapsa: donIne' a:v,
KrishnI Maha:rajni yatsha:ye',
Vasude:v Ra:znyan Da:ran dra:ye',
Tsu:r dini dra:ye' gri:si' ba:ye',
ShabnamI lavi sA:ti' khasith A:ye',
(KrishnI Mahara:jni ....)
Ra:tas manz so>y tullnay A:ye', (KrishnI ......)
VasIde:v Ra:zIni Zi:ch Zi:ch kapIsi:,
DapIsi: karsay Yone' han ,
Athi vo>th to<sI tI athI vyatshIno<voy,
Tathi karInA:vIy Yon' han,
DivIki: vyatshIno<voy Kanike' ko>tuy,
Sha:rika:[3] *Bagwati: sIthIra: ko>tuy.*
Yo<nyah su:zI yo< Na:rA:ni:....... .

The translation of these lines is as under :-

Oh my dear *Brahmins* come and ascend our staircase,

Put on the mark of '*Tilak*', flowers, and rice grains on the forehead.

Be careful so that the time fixed for the '*Yagnyopavita*' does not expire.

---

[1] The scriptures have divided a day into three parts under the charge of three forces of Mother goddess. The evening time is considered under the charge of '*Savitri:*'

[2] The *Brahmins* of *Ka:shi* or *Banaras* are considered very pious throughout the sub- continent from the very ancient times.

[3] One of the names attributed to Mother goddess. Her abode is considered on the *Hari Parbath* hillock near Srinagar city. She is considered to have eighteen arms.

Rohini: is waiting for the appearance of *Chandra*
Oh dear *Brahmins* come and assemble'
Make the arrangements for the Holy Fire.
Great *Rishis,* having a vision beyond time and space, have arrivėd at the right time,
To hear four *Vedas* for the full day.
Brahma has specially come on this occasion,
Accompanied by Lord *Vishnu* and *Shiva.*
He will return in the evening along with goddess '*Savitri:*'
The sun has arrived on the earth and the Saffron has reddened.
The process of completing the *Mekhala* has started,
The smoke of the Holy Fire has gone up into the sky,
The *Brahmin* from *Kashi (Banaras)* has just arrived.
He has come willingly to sow the cottonseed.
Due to the good wishes of king *Krishna,*
This has grown in the fields of king *Vasudeva,*
The ladies of the farmers have come to weed it,
It sprouted with the wetness of the dew (Due to....
It was got collected on the same night (Due to . ..)
O long fiber cotton of king *Vasudeva.*
Ask him, I shall make a '*Yagnyopavita*' out of it,
Pure cotton has come out of it that was carded by hand,
And the *Yagnyopavita* was got prepared from it.
Devaki carded it and the little girl spun it,
Goddess *Sharika* has spun the cotton thread,
Lord *Narayana* has presented the Holy Thread to you [1].

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[1] The name/s of the host/ hostess are inserted by the lady heading the group of the ladies singing the folk songs, at all those places where the mythological names appear in the folk song so as to make it more charming and presentable to the assembled audiences.

This is followed by invitations, which we extend, to all the deities and gods through our folk songs to attend the Holy Thread Ceremony. A few examples are quoted here: - .

Agnai ko>nDI manzI LAkhimi:[1] *dra:ye‘,*
Treyi laTi[2] *a:ye‘ zanIm hyath*
SAmi:rI[3] *Andray Ga:yitray*[4] *dra:ye‘,*
Lolay pu:tis hyath a:ye‘,
ParbatI AndIray Sha:rika: dra:ye‘,(Lolay pu:tis..),
Arda:hav naryao ko>rnas sa:ye‘, (Lolay ... ...)
TulImuli Andray RA:gnya: dra:ye‘,
KrishnI Maha:ra:jas hyath a:ye‘,
Bhishmak Ra:zIni mye’ti De‘sha:ye‘,
Triku:Ti: Divta Di:vi: hyath.

Translation of these lines is as under: -

The goddess of wealth emerged from the Holy Fire,
She attained her birth three times,
Goddess *Gayatri* emerged from behind the mountain ‘*Sumeru*’,
And she came along with my beautiful doll, son.
Goddess *Sharika* came from the ‘*Parbath*’[5] hillock,
She adored my son with her eighteen arms.

---

[1] The goddess of wealth and wisdom.

[2] The three divine powers of a man:- 1. Desire (*Icha Shakhti:*), 2. Knowledge, (*Gyana Shakhti:*) and 3. Performance (*Kriya Shakhti:*).

[3] An imaginary mountain. It is said that the sun rises from behind this mountain and hence an omen of hope and happiness. A number of idioms and proverbs exist in Indian languages including Kashmiri and our writers and poets have made use of this word in a number of shades.

[4] Like *Savitri* the goddess of the evening, *Gayatri* is considered as the goddess of the morning and hence goddess of joy and hope. *Yagnyopavita* too is named as *Gayatri* or (*Gayitray*). It is also one of the *Vedic* hymns. Every Hindu recites it early in the morning at the time of bathing and washing of the *Yagnyopavita*. It is also recited at almost all the religious functions.

[5] A small hillock near the city of Srinagar considered as the abode of goddess *Sharika*.

(And she came....)
Goddess *Ragnya* came from *Tulamula*, [1]
She came along with Lord *Krishna*.
I had seen myself (at the residence of) *Bikshana Bhatta*,
Thirty Million gods with their spouses. [2]

In this way the main folk songs connected with the Holy Thread Ceremony present a complete description of the main ceremony, though the performance of other rituals continues for the whole day. This ceremony, as a whole, can be divided into two parts. The first part comprises the rituals held prior to and up to casting the *Yagnyopavita*, and these include the pre-birth and post-birth *Sanskars* as well. The second part of it contains all the rituals and praxis, which are completed or performed after casting the *Yagnyopavita*. These include the following rites/ *Sanskars*: -.

(1) Pre- Mekhala Rituals:-
a) *Kalash Pu:ja*, and
b) *Agni Kunda Pu:ja*,
(2) Pre-Birth Sanskars :-
a) *Bijawapan or Garbhadan*,
b) *Simantonayan*, and
c) *Pumsawan*.
(3) Post- birth Sanakars:-
a) *Jatakaran*,
b) *Namakarn*,
c) *Surya, (Siryi) Darshan*.
d) *Chandra Darshan*,
e) *Anlprashun*,
f) *Chu:da:karan*. and
(4) *Mekhala*.

After completing the function of putting on the

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[1] A small village in the *Ganderbal* Tehsil of Kashmir considered as the abode of goddess '*Ragnya:*'.

[2] According to the Indian mythology there are '*Trikoti Devas*', thirty million gods and goddesses.

Yognyopavita, the groom and the host return to their original seats in front of the *Hawan Kund* to perform the following rituals and ceremonies.

d) A:Zya Dharshan- **To see reflection in Ghee.**

At the beginning of each ritual the host/boy is asked to perform the "a:*zya darshan'*. All those relatives, friends, and neighbours who come to offer 'Abi:d' at the function complete this ritual. After application of the vermilion on the fore-head and tying of the *'NA:rivan'* on the right wrist, (in case of the males) and on the left wrist, (in the case of the married females), by the priest they perform this ritual. The person is given a walnut, or a wood-apple or a piece of sugar candy in his /her hand by the priest. He/she adds a coin to it and after seeing his/her reflection in the '*ghee*'; he/she throws it gently into the 'pot of *ghee*'. The priest dips the long ladle into the *ghee* and the person after putting a little dry fruit on the ladle filled with *ghee*, takes a handful of barley in his/her both hands joined together and, amidst chanting of hymns by the priest, offers it to the Holy Fire. With this ends this ritual.

In the common Kashmiri language, the ritual is called as the '*a:di darshun*' which does not look as close to the ritual as the former one. '*Azya*' is a Sanskrit word and means 'ghee' and '*Drshan*' means 'to see'. According to the scriptures the reflection that one should try to see in the ghee-pot, include :-

1. The reflection of ones own face,
2. The reflection of the *Agni* or the flames, or
3. The reflection of the sky.

Thus confirming the purity of the substance.

There could be two reasons for the small monitory help extended by the devotees on such occasions. The first and foremost appears that all such functions were

held in the hermitages by the great *Rishis* and in order to give a little monitory help, people might have been making some contributions for such functions. *Ghee* being one of the most important, dear and scarce items in past as it is today, the host was given a little monitory help for its purchase which appears to be the second reason for such donations. All the relatives, friends and neighbours do it out of their own free will and there is no compulsion as for as the scriptures are concerned. This further confirms its nature of being just a 'monetary help'. It may not be out of place to mention here that the host kept the amount for performing such functions till recently. With the changing times, he repudiated to keep this donated money. Thus it became an additional earning for the *Brahmin* acting as '*Hota*' on such functions.

e). *Va:rida:n*: Earthen Stove.

The whole *Mekhala* ceremony comprises twenty-four rituals known as '*Pakhya:k*', out of these sixteen require cooked rice as an offering to the deities, besides other ingredients. As per the requirements prescribed in the Holy Scriptures, rice is to be cooked for all the sixteen rituals separately. The *Pu:fi* cooks one or two kg rice on an earthen oven, known as '*Va:ri da:n*' with many holes on top for separate pots, approximately sixteen in number. This being a cumbersome task, the society, as such, appears to have amended it by cooking it on a stove separately and then completing the formality by putting it into different pots, thus retaining its ancient originality in a mini form. The '*VA:r*' in Kashmiri means a small round earthen pot and '*Da:n*' means 'hearth', '*Chu:la*' or oven. Derived from the root Sanskrit word '*Da:n*' meaning 'the place where fire is burnt'. The '*Va:rida:n*' is just like a portable earthen stove having a single window for insertion of firewood. But its top, unlike the common

stoves, is covered with a pan with multiple holes in it. The cooking holes in it are generally sixteen in number to hold sixteen small pots for cooking. The *'Pu:fi' (Po>f)* completes the function and she gets a good gratification from the host/hostess for arranging this ritual. This is an hour of hectic actions for the *Pu:fi,'* photographers and the video film makers. Every body greets *'Pu:fi'* on this joyful occasion.

In the actual practice the *'Pu:fi'* is asked to prepare a pot of rice for all the rituals collectively and then she performs the obligations as described above. She manages all this so as to keep up the sanctity of the scriptures and also to get the gratification from the host which is generally paid to her in cash as well as in kind. Some affluent people give costly presents or even a golden ornament on the occasion to the *'Pu:fi'* just to please her at this hour of joy. We have got the following folk song which denotes the importance of *'Pu:fi'* on this happy function: -

Shankara:cha:rIch[1] *me'tsi tai Gangay wa:ne',*
So> bAdra:yi ko>r Va:re'da:n.
Myatsi tai pA:nis khAts khAmbi:rIy,
GAmbi:re'[2] *kho>r asi Va:re'da:n.*
Asi ko>r Va:rida:n So>bAdra:ye',
Arzan[3] *Di:vIni bA:riya:ye'.*
Harmo>khI pyaThI che' baji Ganga:ye'[4]
SonI sInzi gaje' 'Ro>pI sund Tha:n.
GangI wa:ni sA:ti myAts A:DranI a:ye', (Arzan...)

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[1] It is a small hillock to the north of the city of Srinagar, Kashmir.

[2] Root Sanskrit word, *'Gambhir'* meaning, 'sky', 'ocean' or 'deep thought'. Here it has been used in the sense of thoughtfulness.

[3] Arjuna, the third son of Pandu of the great epic *Mahabharata*. He is also the husband of Subhadra, sister of Lord *Krishna*.

[4] Known as *'GanglbaI'*, the source of river *Sindh 'Uttara Ganga'* or 'The *Ganga* of Kahmir' is to the North of the Kashmir valley near the *Haramukata* mountain range. The Hindus of Kashmir consider it a pious place and also perform the *Shra:dha* of their dead at the *GanglbaI* Lake on the eighth bright fortnight of the month of *Bhadrapada* each year.

VasIdi:v Ra:zIni Ta:The' Go>bro,
Varida:nas rAnew Ka:Thay Chon.[1]
So>rgI da:rI Andray KabIrA:j[2] *ma:s a:ye', ...*
So>nI sund va:ri pho>t vo>Di pyaTh hyath.
So>bAdra: sA:ni' tas raTne' dra:ye'.(Arzan)
VaikonThI[3] *pyaThI yo>t Ka:mIdi:n*[4] *a:ye',*
Vignye'[5] *tsa:yi do>d hyani tas*
Ami do>dI sA:ti' batI ranIne' a:y'e (Arzan .)
ChAtIrI Ha:rI Anzul AnIpu:rna:ye',[6]
Va:rida:nas so>y ranIne' a: ye',
Sha:rika: Bgagwati: bA:grIni dra:ye',(Arzan .....).
Va:re' da:nas shayitrIh tsA:ri:,
Va:rida:nas SAndri: tsandan lIshe',
Ziniche' trIshe' la:gA:se',
Va:rida:nas sAndri: tsandan go>ne',
Vanay va:lus to>lsi: ka:Th.
HA:r rani batI va:ri do>day sA:ti:
DarIba:yi[7] *a:ye'i karA:ne' Hum.*
Va:rida:nas rAnimay KhAzI:r lIshe',
Ho>day Shi:shay[8] *kAri:zye's,*
So>bAdra:yi rAniyo khAzI:r lIshe',
BrihaspatI thA:vizys Ho>day shi:sh.

These lines are translated as under: -
Out of the clay from the *Shankracharya* hillock
and the water from the *Ganga,*
Subhadra has made the *Va:rida:n,*

---

[1] It is one of the old varieties of paddy crop known for its fragrance and taste.

[2] .It appears to be a distorted form of 'Kaviraj', meaning a 'wise' or 'an experienced' lady.

[3] The abode of Vishnu in the heavens, the name of a Paradise, considered as the abode of gods.

[4] Cow belonging to *Indra* and believed to yield whatever may be desired from it. A cow that gives plenty of milk.

[5] .Nymphs.

[6] . One of the names attributed to the mother goddess as '*Annapurna*'

[7] .'*Dhar*' a high caste among the Kashmiri Pnadits.

[8] .The left over portion of the offerings form the sacrificial offerings meant for the devotees.

The clay and water was leaven together,
The learned lady has made a *Varida:n* for us.
Subhadra, the spouse of *Arjuna*, has made the *Va:rida:n* for us.
(It has come from) the high mountains of *Hara-mukaTa* Ganga
Its inner portion is made of gold and its lid is made of silver,
The clay was made wet with the water from Ganga
The spouse of *Arjun Deva* did all this.
Oh dear son of king *Vasudeva,*
Cook the rice from the *'Ka:ThI Chon'* paddy on *Vą:rida:n.*
The most experienced *Masi* has arrived from the Heavens,
With a golden coop on her head filled with the pots,
Our *Subhadra* came forward to receive it from her.
The spouse of *Arjuna Deva,* ....
The *'Kamadenu'* has arrived here from the Heavens,
The fairies have entered (the shed) to milk her.
They have arrived to cook the rice with that milk,
(The spouse ....)
She arrived to cook it on the *Va:rida:n,*
Goddess *Annapurna* has a golden umbrella and a necklace with trimmings, (Or)
Annapurna has brought the rice extracted from the *ChAtrI Ha:r* or *Ha:rI Anzul* [1] varieties of paddy.
And goddess *Sharika* started its distribution.
The *Va:rida:n* has thirty six holes,
Kindle fire in it with the pieces of sandalwood,
Then put the fire wood pieces in it.
Kindle the *Va:rida:n* with a Sandal wood log,
Go and fetch the dry basil plants from the forest,
The merle would cook the food with milk,

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[1] *'Chatraha:r'* and *'HarI anzul'* are the old varieties of paddy which were grown in Kashmir previously.

The ladies of *Dhar* families have come to participate in the '*Homa*'.
I cooked the pieces of dates on the *Va:rida:n*,
You should keep the residue (*HotIshi:sh)* out of the offerings made.
Subhadra has cooked the pieces of dates,
O Jupiter, the Priest of gods, you should keep the residue out of it.

In the mean time the hostess arrives among the ladies' gathering that were busy with singing of '*VanIvun*' since morning. They address the hostess in a chiding manner in the following words for having neglected them for such a long time: -

Vo>Di tyaki' pu:ts tai hali dya:rI dAjiye',
Vo>thi DaykI Bajiye'[1] *ke'ntsha: khya:v.*
VasIdi:v Ra:zIni' mutsar dya:rI dAjiye',(Vo>thi ...)
Di:vakh Ra:zIni ku:ri DyakI bAjiye',
Ka:ndur oye' tso>chi pAjiye' hyath
Tso>chi khAnd ditam ya: Bo>TI tserI pAjiye'....

Translation: -

You have the vermilion marked muslin on your head and bag filled with money tied to your belt.
Stand up Oh, prosperous one, give us something to eat.
You open the money bag of king *Vasudeva*, (Stand ....)
Oh you auspicious daughter of king *Deva Sahi Khingla,*
The baker has come with a coop filled with bread,
Either give us a piece of bread or a coop of sweet apricot, '*Bo>TI tserI*'[2] (Stand up ....)

After the breakfast the ladies\engaged for the '*VanIvun*', feel satisfied and then the '*Hawan Shala*' and

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[1] The lady whose husband is alive.

[2] '*Tser*' means an 'apricot'. The '*Bo>tI Tser*' is bigger in size than the ordinary one and is more common in the valley. Laddakh, also known as '*BotI Desha*' in old scriptures of Kashmir, is most famous for this special variety of fruit. Hence it appears that the nomenclature has adopted the prefix from the said word, '*BotI*'.

the '*Brahmins*' present there, become their target. And they address them satirically: -

Brihaspat Goro Mattan[1] *ta:m gAtsizihe',*
ATas kyath wA:lizihe' tyaki' kastulah[2]
GorI sIndis buthis Siryi chu prazla:n,
Asi konI go>nDun KA:nkIni band.
Asi' Di:vi: chay Sa:m Vi:d gayva:n
Tohi' Brahman konI ShA:nts para:n[3]
Brihaspat Goro Day toThyo yo,
Shyankay shabId ti bu:zuy no

Translation:-

You should have gone to *Mattan*, Oh *Brahman,*
And bought in hand a pot for keeping the vermilion.
The face of the priest is as resplendent as the sun,
Why have you not tied a wrist knot to us?
We goddesses (ladies) are singing from the *Samveda*[4],
Why don't you, *Brahmins*, recite the '*Sha:nti Pa:Tha*'?
Oh Brahman (Jupiter), may God bless you,
We didn't hear even the sound of the conch shell from you.

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1 The name of a village on the Anantnag Pahalgam. Road.. The '*Mahatamyas*' and Kalhana's Rajtarangini contain, among other names, this name of the village, but in the common Kashmiri language it is known as '*Bhowan*' derived from Sanskrit word, '*Bhawan*' meaning lofty buildings. The old remains now almost buried under the ground confirm the fact. It is also known as the '*Surya Tirtha*' and the Hindus of the sub-continent perform the '*Shra:dha*' ceremony of their fore-fathers at this *Ti:rtha.*' during the additional lunar months known as '*Malamas*' and '*Bhanumas*'.

2 Also known as '*Katsal Du:n*' made of brass. '*Du:n*' means a walnut. As its shape resembles it, hence called '*Katsal Du:n.*' its both halves fit on each other and it contains a vermilion or Saffron paste used for marking on the forehead.

3 Derived from the root Sanskrit word '*Shanti Path*'. In the midst of each ritual, a special '*Shanti Path*' is collectively recited by all the *Brahmins* from the holy scriptures in a melodious voice called '*ShA:nts*'. It contains prayers/good-wishes for the betterment of the whole universe.

4 It is one among the four Vedas. It is considered as an authority on the '*Sangita Shastra*' and it is believed that *Shiva* has compiled it himself.

Now the ladies, busy in singing the '*VanIvun*', examine the other essential things pertaining to the '*Hawan Shala*', and they address the *Brahmins* in the words that follow. There are a number of words in this portion of the '*VanIvun*', which have clearly been borrowed from the Persian language and adopted in these lines of our folk songs. For instance the word '*Gar*', in the first line which means, 'maker', 'mender' as in '*Zargar*', the 'gold smith', etc. It shows that the lines are a recent addition to these folk songs: -

Tohi chivI chandI gar asi kya: Bu:zo,
ManDlas [1] *kits gA:r ro<zA:vo.*
Bo<z ma:li Brahamno ro<z kan dA:rith.
ManDul ma:li trA:v zi vyastA:rith.
ManDIlIchi ja:ye' vyasta:r a:vIyo,
Auta:r Krishn JuvA:ne', [2]
ManDul li:khiv sami sami ja:ye',
Sha:ye' Shri: Bhagva:na:ye'.
MunDul li:khiv na: na: rangay,
Zange' a:yo<v Parami:shwo>r.
ManDul lekhanas dApiv kunuy pA:thIr,
Nu:n vAr tay be'yi mo>harI pra:s.
Na:ra:n Juvas mangai mange',
Kanyakh zange' anA:se'.
ManDul li:khiv pamposh khArith
Pa:nI Bhagva:n a:v lekhA:ne'.
ManDul li:khiv Siryi praka:sho,
Naqa:sh [3] *animay lekhA:nye'.*
ManDul lyu:khyo Ko>ngI tI Se'ndre',
YAndra:zas rut bo>vi:nay.

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[1] A place decorated with the coloured lime stone powder meant for twelve *Zodiac* signs called '*ManDul*'.

[2] It is the name of an unknown Brahmin who appears to have mastered in the art of '*ManDal*' decoration. In the *VanIvun*, the name of the host/*Kula Guru* is inserted in place of the name quoted above.

[3] Persian word meaning, "Engraver'

MAnDul Lyu:khuy lyo>dur tai cho>tuy,
Na:ra:n hyo>tuy A:si:nay.
ManDlas chA:nis kha:ryam poshi thare',
GarI lyu:khu:yo HarI TsAndra:znIy
Brihaspat Goran kha:re's poshi thare',
GarI lyu:khun chA:nis Yonyas pe'Th.
VasIdi:v Ra:zas pho>ji poshi thare'.
KrishnI Bhagwa:nInis Yonyas pe'Th.
Arshi[1] *pye'ThI vo>th Arzun,*
ManDul lo>g lekhIne',
Farshi[2] *pye'ThI Brahama: vochIne' a:v.*
Vuchtav Brihaspat Goras athas,
ManDul kathay kara:n chus.
Sha:ba:sh Brihaspat Gornis pa:nas,
ManDul khorun tha:nas pye'Th.
MandDlas chA:nis gul[3] *gayi roshan,*[4]
Vuni vuni poshan phullyah ja:n.
VasIdi:v Ra:zIni gul gayi roshan,
Lasinas tI kArinas po>tray ka:r,
DivIki: Ma:le' rum gayi roshan,
(Vuni Vuni ..)
Vaiko>nThI Andray ManDul chu khasa:n
Brahma: chu vasa:n vuchA:ne'.

Translation:-

What have we heard? You are worried about your pockets,
Haven't you a keen desire for the preparation of the *ManDul?*
O my dear *Brahmin,* hear me attentively,
O dear you should draw the *ManDul* with care.
You have got a good knowledge about the place of drawing the *MunDul.*

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[1] Persian word meaning, 'Heaven'
[2] Persian word meaning, 'ground', 'earth'
[3]-[4] Persian words meaning, 'Flower', and 'Bright', respectively.

At the house of Autar Krishn jo, [1]
You draw the *ManDul* on a level ground,
Just near the place of gods.
Draw the *ManDul* with the help of different colours,
God himself has performed the '*Zang*' ceremony.
There is a single act for drawing the *ManDul*,
Salt, a cake of spices and a pure gold coin.
Go and request *Narayana* repeatedly,
Ask a small girl to perform the '*Zang*' ceremony.
Also draw a lotus while laying the *ManDul*.
God himself has come to draw it.
Draw the *ManDul* in the broad day light,
I have called in the engravers to lay it
Draw the *ManDul* with vermilion and saffron,
May god *Indra* prosper,
Colour the *MaDu*l yellow and white.
May *Narayana* be your well- wisher.
I made the flower branches on your *ManDul*,
The spouse of *Harishchandra* completed the inner portions [2].
Jupiter, the priest raised its flower plants,
Inner portions were completed on the eve of your *Yagnyopavita*.
The flower plants of king *Vasudeva* have bloomed,
On the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony of Lord *Krishma*.
Arjuna has come from the heavens and started drawing the *ManDul*.
And *Brahma* has come on the earth to see it.
Oh see the workmanship of the hands of the priest.
The *ManDul* is speaking of it loudly.
Salutations are to the dignity of Jupiter, the Priest,
He has laid the *ManDul* at its proper place.

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[1] Here the name of the host is inserted in the VanIvun.

[2] The famous legendry king *Harish Chandra* who faced odd trials for keeping his promises and commitment to up-hold the truth.

The flowers of your *ManDul* have become bright
The blossoms are still bright.
The flowers of king *Vasudeva* have become bright
Let his son live long and perform the son's duties.
Devaki felt greatly honored and elated.
The blossoms are still bright.
The *ManDul* emerges from the heavens,
The *Brahma* is coming to see it.

f). *Abi:d, 'Bhiksha' (Byakhya:)*- Receiving of Alms.

Attainment of peace is the ultimate goal of human endeavour. It emerges from the enlightenment of human mind and enlightenment of mind needs education. It is because of this very fact that our society had established great schools of thought in the past in remote hermitages and the children were sent to these centers for the attainment of education. The society too had the obligation to look after the needs of these centers, more so when their own kith and kin were involved and attached with such centers. Hence a little of their income was put aside and donated for the maintenance of these centers. Such donations were sent to these schools through their wards in the form of alms known as '*Biksha*' pronounced in Kashmiri as '*Bye'khya:*' so as to relieve the propellers of these centers of the worries of day-to-day requirements. The pupil was sent to the nearby areas and villages to receive alms meant for the *Ashram* (School). Thus the teachers of such institutions remained free from the economic worries for the up keep of their centers. In this way they achieved peace of mind and devoted more time for furtherance of the activities of their schools of thought. It helped them to achieve perfection in their cause because peace of mind is the pre-requisite for the attainment of perfection.

Though the existence of such *Gurukuls* or schools, met a total annihilation as a result of changed social order, but asking for alms for the *Kula Guru* is still alive in our *Mekhala Sanskar.* All the relatives, friends and neighbours who attend this function present their *'Biksha:'* or *'Abi:d'* to the boy after they are marked with 'Vermillion ' on their fore-head, tie the wrist knot, *'NA:ri'van'* and go through the ritual of *'Azya Darshan'.* The boy gets up with the *'Tha:li'* in his left hand for receiving alms and the *'Dandam'*, the 'mulberry stick', in his right hand and addresses a male donor like this. *'Bhu, Bhiksham Dehi, Abid Mahara:'* and to a lady donor like this *'Bhawati, Bhiksham Dehi, Abid Habi'.* Besides the content, the language in both the sentences is *Sanskrit* and the *Brhamchari* asks for alms in this very language. The only two words of Kashmiri language used in the sentences are *'Mahara'* and *'Habi'* as the 'concluding words' to denote the gender of the donor. The 'address words', *'Bhu:'* and *'Bhawati'*, and other words of the two sentences are in Sanskrit. Besides clarifying the gender of the donor, it is the first attempt to introduce the *Brhamchari* in a society and the household so as to teach him the art of conversation

As contained in the scriptures, the first *'Abi:d'* is to be given to the boy by his *Ma:si* (mother's sister). In order to save the *Brhamchari* from having a feeling of inferiority, the boy has been directed to go to his *'Ma:si'* for asking for the first alms. It is a natural instinct in a man that a boy is more close to his *'Ma:si'* even than his mother. Hence the first *'Abi:d'* from her according to the scriptures. After the *Yagnyopavita* by the father, this process gets momentum as the groom returns to his original seat, i.e., in front of the Holy Fire. Our folk songs too have given a due place to this ritual in the following words: -

Athas tshlnimay so>nl slnzl vA:ji:,
Ma:ji ti goham Abi:de'.

Do>has phyu:rham A:nay Daban,
Baban ti goham Abi: de'.

The translation of these lines is in the following words: -

I put a golden ring in your hand,
You still went to your mother for *'Abi:d'!*
You wandered for the whole day among the palatial balconies fitted with mirrors,
You still went to fatherly people for *'Abi:d'!*.

In addition to the extracts from the folk songs already discussed, the ladies singing the '*VanIvun*' included the '*Ram Lila*' and the '*Kriashna Lila*' in their folk songs so as to extend '*VanIvun*' for the whole day. Occasionally they make a satirical attack on people and the society through their *VanIvun*. A few such examples are quoted below: -

Ṭe'lik'i BaTI[1] *kya:h darmi: A:si:.*
KA:shi' do>h A:si kara:n ne'ra:ha:r.
BA:shi' do>h khyava:n brynI su:rI[2] *khA:si*
RamI LAkhiman vanvA:si go>v
Aziki' BaTI kya:h pA:pi: A:si:,
KA:shi' do>h chi: khyawa:n ga:ri[3] *phalha:r*
BA:shi' do>h chi: khyava:n ne'ni batI khA:si:
(Ram LAkhiman...)
Te'liki' BaTI kya:h darmi: A:si,

---

[1] The root word is '*Bhattaraka*'. *Bhat/I*, appears a short form of it and is a common sub-caste of a number of people of the valley. However, the word '*BhatI*' is specifically meant for a person from the Kashmiri pandit family.

[2] It is a famous tree used as timber, fodder and firewood. It is said that in the past its ashes were used for washing clothes as the bleaching powder or soap was not known in those days. But how far it was used to clean wash human stomach, is a matter of research. Actually it appears that the original text should have been '*BrahmI Su:tra*' meaning the work containing the precepts, compiled by *Ved Vyasa* known as the '*Brahma Sutras*' – a filiform between the man and the Supreme Self.

[3] Water chestnuts or its flour used on the fasting days as an edible.

SatI vArishi A:si' kara:n Kanya: Da:n,[1]
TimInIy So>rgIki bar vIthi' A:si:(Ram LAkhiman .)
Aziki BaTI kya:h pA:pi: A:si,
SatI vIri'shan ko>re'n athI da:ra:n,
Timnly NrIkIki bar vAthi' A:si:.(Ram LAkhiman...)
Translation:
How devoted were the people of those days,
They would keep a complete fast on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight,
On the twelfth day they would take cups full of ashes from '*Bre'n*' tree
Rama and *Lakshmana* have gone to the forests to live there.
How sinful are the Hindus of today,
They take water chestnuts as a fruit-diet on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight.
On the twelfth day they eat cups full of meat and rice
How pious were the Hindus of those days,
They would marry their daughters when they were only seven years [2] old.
The doors of the Heaven were open for such people,
How wicked are the Hindus of to day?
They extend their hands before their seven-year-old daughters for receiving their earning,
The doors of the hell are open for such people,

g). *The Ga:yitray Mantra*.

After completing the Holy Thread ceremony, the *Brahmchari* makes a vow to act according to the directions of the scriptures. The *Kula Guru* blesses him for a long life and prosperity. He also utters the '*Gayitray*

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1 . Marriage, (donation of a girl in marriage according to the Indian thought.)
2 This shows that child marriage was common during the medieval times in the Kashmir society.

Mantra' into his right ear. In ancient times of the '*Shrutis*' and '*Smritis*', the *Vedic* truths including the hymns were transmitted by the word of mouth into the human ear and these were listened so attentively that these could be reproduced word for word by the listener. The importance of listening is further exemplified when the *Guru* whispers the *Mantra* into the right ear of the pupil and the disciple listens to it whole-heartedly. It is enough for the disciple to get enlightened. Listening not only helps in assimilating what is being said but it also prompts a person to speak less. It is a fact that the language changes with the change in time and place but the words never die and are said to be eternal. That is why our scriptures have called the 'word' as '*Shabda Brahma*' - the 'Eternal Word'. The *'Gyatri Mantra'* uttered into the right ear of the pupil reads as under: -

'Om Bhur Bhawah, Swah Tat Savitur Varenyam Bhargo Devasya Di Mahya Diyo Yonah Prachodayat.'[1]

Meaning:-

'I adore the eternal power which is in the form of '*Om*', which is omnipresent and all powerful in all the three worlds - earth, atmosphere and the universe, which is the Supreme Soul, the morning confidence, the cause of formation, preservation and annihilation, worth owning for all, which is the source of light and fortune. I adore such a great power. May the Fountain-head of all such powers give me the perfect wisdom so that I take the path of truthfulness.'

h). *NetrI PaTh* -
Cover cloth for 'Shanti Pa:Th' *or* 'ShA:nts'

The scriptures call it '*Ushnish*', meaning a '*turban*' or a '*diadem*'.Actually in the Holy Thread Ceremony a sheet of white cloth is thrown over the head

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[1] Bhatt, Pandit Keshav. *Mekhala Pustak, Upayanam*, 1925, p.62.

of the groom so as to cover his head and body. The priest continues chanting hymns for the well being of the whole world, hymns connected with the codes of conduct for the daily life of the *Brahmchari* and asks the boy to move his hands up and down gently in confirmation. The pupil is asked to meditate deeply on what is contained in the Holy Scriptures for peace and illumination of his self/ soul.

The meditation opens two energy centers in the body- the heart, (The *Anahata Chakra*) and the crown (The *Sahasrar Chakra*). When the two charkas are open, the divine energy flows down the practitioner, making him contented and joyful. He becomes a channel of divine energy. This energy is used to bless earth and all the beings on it with peace and divine light. Thus it is a means of bringing happiness and prosperity to the whole universe. The practitioner experiences increased prosperity, sharpening of his mental faculties, inner peace, reduced stress level, heightened intuition and self-confidence through continuous meditation. Meditation generates tolerance, peace of mind and a feeling of well-being – an intimate feeling of oneness with everybody, whether foe or friend. The purpose of keeping the pupil under the garment is to seclude him from the worldly temptations because meditation requires concentration and concentration is the result of maintaining silence. The *Bhagwad Gita*, the *Upanishads* the *Samhitas*, all lay stress on maintaining silence. In the *Gita*, Lord *Krishna* says 'I am Silence' whereas the *Upanishads* call it '*Shabda Brahmana*.' The soul is considered as the pure silence and the Ultimate Reality is silence. It plays a vital role for a spiritual aspirant while ascending the spiritual ladder. In silence one goes deep into inner core of ones being to hear the voice of *Atma*. The silence is God Himself and He speaks from within when we are silent. Silence is a pre-requisite for meditation. It saves our inner energy, which we exhaust while talking. A person with a worldly mind makes much noise like an empty vessel whereas an

illuminated mind works noiselessly and unshaken. A mind working silently generates new ideas. If our aim in life is spiritual evolution then practicing silence has to be accepted as a powerful means to achieve it, even if we are engrossed with the material world. A sure way of practicing silence is to become a good listener. Hence the scriptures have directed to keep the *Brahmchari* covered with a piece of cloth on all such occasion when he is asked to meditate deeply,

i). Ma:sI Do>d TI Po>phI Cha:y – Milk/Tea Served by the Maternal/ Paternal Aunts

After completing the '*Abi:d*' ceremony both the aunties of the paternal and the maternal side start serving milk, called the '*Ma:sI Do>d*', prepared by the maternal aunt and the '*Po>phI Cha:y*', provided by the paternal aunt, to the guests who start pouring in. It is a social obligation for the two to help the host on the occasion. Besides, the in-laws of the host come forward to serve either fruit or sweets to the guests. The milk and tea served on the occasion should be specially prepared and must contain cashew nuts, cardamom, cinnamon, and almonds. It should be flavoured with a little saffron. If the tea/milk served, is not of a good quality, the ladies singing the folk-song pass satirical remarks on the hostess. Therefore, to avoid all this humiliation, she keeps a personal watch on the quality of the stuff. All these things are served to one and all without any discrimination

Now a days different eating stalls are set up with a variety of edibles. The guests can have things of their choice from these stalls. However, some families observe complete social reform and establish their own stalls on such occasions. As such, the '*Masi*' or the '*Pufi*' neither accept anything from the host nor have they to spend anything on such activities. But it does not affect their

right to give '*Abi:d*' to the boy at the '*Hawan Shala*' Though some people consider such a reform as a good step for the society while others consider it the main reason for the disintegration of the families. Though nobody can deny the fact that maintaining the social traditions is as important as observing the rituals itself but without any pomp and show and well within one's economic means.

j). Post *Mekhala:* rituals

Again we return to the '*Hawan Shala*' where the priests are busy in reciting '*Sha:nti Pa:Th*' and completing the post *Mekhala* rituals. The guests come and after completing their ritualistic formalities in between these recitations, offer their '*Abi:d*' to the groom and leave the '*Hawan Shala*'.The main rituals completed are:-

1. *Trividicam* Includes the introduction of the Vedic knowledge etc., to the *Brahmchari*.
2. *Upakrama*: Paying of homage to the *Rishis*, twenty-one in number.
3. *Chatur Hotricam*: Paying salutations to *Brahma*, the creator of this universe.
4. *Apavargah* Paying thanks to *Rishis* and *Brahma*.
5. *Pravargya Vritam:* - The *Brahmchari* is taught the codes of conduct for the day-to-day rituals to be performed by him.
6. *Apavargay Pravargya Vritam* -------do---------.

7. Arun Vritam, *The pupil is taught the modes of deep penance in complete seclusion.*

8. Apavargay Aruna Vritam. : *The pupil is given the basic knowledge of day-to-day rituals.*

9. Aupanishada Vritam: *All the hosts and their spouses and the boy/s are called to pay their oblations to gods by offering a handful of barley to the Holy Fire, called family* 'Athi Pho>l'.

10. Apavergay Aupanishada Vrita: *All the people present on the occasion, all the hosts and their spouses and the boy/s assemble at the* Hawan Shala *at this hour to pay their oblations to all the gods and deities by offering flowers. A collective prayer is held on the occasion called 'a:rthi' and the function is also called* 'Khe'yama: Po<sh'.

*11.*Shri Kama, *Offering thanks to Mother goddess on completion of the function.*

12. Yashas Kama: *Offering of felicitations to all the planets including the moon and the sun on the successful completion of the function.*

13. *Goadan:* The *Brahmchari,* according to the scriptures, completes the sixteenth years of his life/stay in the *Ashram* at the time when this ritual is completed. On this occasion once again '*ChuDakar*' is done to the *Brahmchari* to enable him to proceed for achieving higher knowledge.

14. Apvargay Trividhika: This is the last but one ritual completed in the presence of Holy Fire and involves the following two major rites: -

a) To offer the ceremonial kitchen preparations to gods including *Agni* and what remains or is left over out of the offerings is processed as '*Naived*' for all those present at the function.

b) Presentation of the final offering called *'Athi Pho>l'*.[1] This offering is made by one and all, present on the occasion. Prayers are held for the welfare of the whole world, all people, our rivers, atmosphere and above all, the plant kingdom around us. The flower of a coconut tree '*JaTa Dhari*' is offered by the priest while others make an offering of barley and sugar candy etc. After the last offering is made to the Holy Fire, every body is marked on the forehead known as '*Trayusham.*' It is the residue

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[1] The word appears to have been derived from the Sanskrit root-word '*Ati Phal*', meaning 'Supreme Reward,'

from the ghee and the ashes from the Holy Fire mixed together on the ladle-spoon used for '*Homa*' and then marked on the forehead of each devotee. The recitation on the occasion made is: - '*Jamad Agni* prescribed it for the welfare of the followers of *Kashyapa,* it has been the defender of gods in the past, it may defend you too'[1]. The Sanskrit couplet repeated by the priests on the occasion is as under: -

'Trayusham, Jamadagnayh Kashpasyş Trayusham, Yat Devanam Trayusham Tattay Astu Trayusham.

After this the host makes offerings from the ceremonial kitchen preparations to his fore-fathers, to the thirty six deities, called '*AnnI Kan'*, *Agni*, the deity of the kitchens, the birds and the two watch-guards of the *Hawan Shala*, called the '*Kshe'trIpa:ls'*, and all get their share from the said kitchen preparation. Final salutions are paid to all the gods, called '*Atsidra'*, or '*Achidra'* in Sanskrit by offering followers to them finally.

k). *Snanvidhi:* Code of conduct for bathing

This is the last of the rites, which the boy has to perform at the bank of a river or at any place where water is available. The boy is asked to change his ceremonial dress, to abandon the "*Kusha'* rope, the '*Mriga:zan'* and the '*Dandam*' He puts on a new dress specially got stitched for the occasion which includes a fine head dress – a turban called '*Dasta:r'* and a decorated umbrella called, '*ChAthIr'*. An expert lady draws a circular figure on the ground with the coloured lime powder called '*Vyu:g'* and the boy/s stands on it facing east. A plate containing some rice, a little of '*VAr'* and a coin is kept on the said circular '*Vyu:g*'. After performing the '*a:lath'* ceremony by the mother/grand mother, the boy is offered

[1] Handoo, Pt. Keshov Bhatt, *Pakhyak Vidhi*, 1919, p 12.

a little sugar candy to eat three times. A long piece of cloth containing a little rice and a piece of *'VAr'* tied on its both ends, is cast over the shoulders of the boy. It is called *'SA:dI PhuTIji'*. Now the groom is ready to leave for the temple or the water spot *'Ya:rIbal'*. The conch shell is blown, the crackers burst, and in this atmosphere of happiness and gaiety the groom leaves ahead of a convoy of cars. The *Kula Guru* accompanies him and explains to him the codes of bathing as contained in the scriptures. Besides the codes of bathing and washing of the *Yagnyopavita,* the boy is made aware of libation of water to the deities/ gods/manes, *Rishis* and other venerable ones, known as *'Div pe'tIr'* in the common language. After this the boy is taken to the temple to offer his obeisance to the deity and then all return to the *Hawan Shala.*

In the mean-time just after the departure of the groom for the temple, all the hostesses and the ladies of the house assemble where the *'Vyu:g'* was laid and circumambulate on it. It is known as *'Arun ro>th'*. [1] It is the only ladies dance, which, as a ritual, has survived till date during the process of the *Mekhala.* This type of dancing is performed in an attractive manner with the following song: -

Asi karav ArnI ro>th tI be'yi vanIvunye',
HA:r wAtshai ntsIne' tI sA:r so>nIsInzye'.(Asi karav'...).
Ha:ri gatshyam De'jiho>r[2] *tI suti so>nIsundye'.(Asi karav...)*
Ha:ri gatshyam aTIho>r tI suti so>nIsundye'(Asi karav..)

The translation of these lines is as under –

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[1] This actually appears to be a Sanskrit word, *'Arnu Vrita'*. *'Arun'* is one of the names attributed to the sun. It befits the *'Mekhala'* as the sun and the moon have a special place in the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony and are adored a number of times during its various rituals. Besides, the formation of the 'Vyu:g'' is also round, hence this name. Ps. Handoo, J. L., *Hindi Aur Kashmiri Kay Lok Geet*, P. 75.

[2] The swinging ear ornament.

We will perform the '*Arnu Vrita*' and also sing,
The beautiful merle, all made of gold, has come to dance;
The merle needs a swinging ear ornament that too made of gold,
The merle's additional lower part of the ear ornament '*ATIho>r*' and that too made of gold,

Here the names of the hostess and other female members of the family are inserted instead of the word, '*HA:r*'. After this short form of singing/dancing on the pattern of modern '*VanIvun*' the following short-rhythmic couplets are sung while dancing: -

HumI vo>thum tI ve'gi kho>tum
TotI vo>thum Ya:rIbal,
HumI vo>thum tI ve'gi kho>tum
Ra:ji vo>thum Ya:rbal.

. Translation:

Standing up from the *Hawan Shala* (he) came to the '*Vyu:g*',
My parrot has gone to the water spot,
Standing up from the Holy Fire (he) came to the '*Vyu: g*',
My (son) Raja has gone to the riverbank.

The name of the boy/s is included instead of the word, '*Raji*'. It is also repeated in respect of all the male members of the family and the dancing continues for a long time till the people return from the temple.

A few young men and ladies clean the place of the *Hawan Shala* and keep it ready for dinner, called 'the *Navi:d*'. All the family members who keep a fast for the full day including the hosts and the hostesses, the *Brahmchari/s* and the priests take their dinner at this place. Seating arrangement for feasting of the remaining guests is made out side this space. As soon as all the guests sit properly, the priest or a representative of the host, brings the pitcher from the place of the '*Kalash*' in an open metal basin along with walnuts and the water.

While sprinkling the Holy Water on each and every person, he gives a walnut to every body as '*Naived*' which is followed by serving the dinner again called as '*Naived*'. Every body present there has to take food collectively after taking the '*A:tsIman*' or rinsing of mouth with water also known as, '*Apu:sha:n*'. The host makes payment to the priests and the amount received as '*Abi:d*' is handed over to the *Kula Guru* who gives generally an amount of rupees fifty or more to the host for preparation of rice pudding, *Khi:r*, on the day when the yellow coloured *Ygnyopativa* of the boy/s is changed for the white one and the ladies of the house have to take off the '*NA:rivan*' bands from their hair-locks for immersion into a river or a canal. The function is known as changing of the '*Yoni*' and '*NA:ri'van Tra:vIni*'. It is held two or three days after the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony. The priest attends to their house on the scheduled date and completes this ritual.

l). *Ko>shal Hom* : - the farewell

The next day of the '*Mekhala*' is known as the '*Ko>shal hom*'. The word '*Hom*', '*Hum*' appears to have been derived from the root Sanskrit word, '*Homa*' meaning, 'offerings made to the Holy Fire'. On this date a short ritual is performed. It is a kind of thanks giving to all the gods and deities for their kind co-operation in this magnanimous function. The yellow rice, called '*TAhAr*' is prepared on the occasion and after proper prayers it is served to one and all present at the function. The host holds a good feast on this occasion.

Thus the Mekhala *Sanskar* comes to an end.

Chapter Four

Sanskars and rituals connected with Grahasta Ashram

Kha:ndar - Marriage.

(*Lagan, Vivah, Kanya Dan*)

The ambitions of parents develop fore-fold as soon as their child attains youth leaving behind the sweet memories of his/her infancy, childhood, adolescence, and schooling. The time of his/her schooling and college life is the real period of his/her development. The wishes and ambitions of his/her parents get activated as their children grow. It is a period of longings and desires for the parents when their children move into their twenties irrespective of the gender difference. On the one hand they begin to think differently about their children. and on the other hand a host of middlemen start coming to apprise them of a number of marital prospects. Rejecting one, means arrival of another proposal. The middleman puts forward a list of such families along with the natal charts and family records of a number of such prospective families for exploring the possibility of match making. The first thing the parents do is to procure a number of natal charts for the selection of a bridegroom/bride for their own son/daughter. Here they need the services of an astrologer for selecting the right and desirable one of their choice out of a few of the prospective families on the basis of matching and comparing their Zodiac/Lunar positions from their natal charts. Thus they approach the astrologer of their choice and liking who comes to their help at this crucial juncture.

It may be pointed out here that while considering the matches for marriage, the caste and the family '*gotra*' of the matching families, is kept in view. If both the families that of the boy and of the girl, are of the same '*gorta*' called '*Swa-gotri*' and that in case seven generations have not yet been completed, (according to

the family tree of a particular family,) in between the two families, there is a religious binding not to approve such a marriage. In case such a marriage is held due to inexplicable reasons or under certain compulsions, the children born out of such a marriage are called '*Varna Sankar*', or hybrid. A person who deserts his caste or creed once, cannot be admitted back to it according to the Hindu way of living called, '*Dharma*' because such a person is called as '*Ko>lI Chyut*' meaning one who is dropped out/degraded from his caste/ creed or '*gotra*'. This is perhaps the main reason why the Kashmiri Pandits have retained their ancestral purity of blood and genealogy in the lap of their compressed culture with the result that they still retain their special place in the cluster of world civilizations. Anyway, this is the field of anthropological studies, which requires deeper research. Here it may be pointed out that after assessing the caste and the *gotra* of both the families the proceedings for the proposed marriage are set in motion with the help of an astrologer.

Astrology is a well-developed science and, besides having a vast scope in modern science, is used to foretell the coming fortunes and misfortunes. Astrologers make predictions on the basis of the study of horoscopes. Horoscopes of different people are always diverse and the varied planetary positions indicate the thoughts, patience/ force (called "*Bala*"), character, health, wealth and behavior of a person under different planetary positions. So to assess all these compatibilities, horoscopes of a boy and a girl are matched before marriage.

According to the Indian astrology an auspicious Zodiac position of the sun at the time of the birth of a child called, '*Lagan*', (*LagIn*) is considered to be the body and that of the moon is considered as the heart/mind, ('*Man*') or *Rashi*. Love, respect, affection, tolerance and the like feelings, need the involvement of mind/heart '*Man*' and not of the body. That is why the

great Rishis having knowledge of astrology have advised matching of the Zodiac positions of the stars according to the Rashi at the time of birth of a boy and a girl before their marriage. After considering all the astrological aspects, the marriage between the two is accepted by the families.

1. *Tye'kin MilIna:vIni'* – Matching of Horoscopes.

While giving approval for the marriage, the following factors are looked into by the concerned astrologer: -

1. The Zodiac signs of both the boy and the girl should be friendly or neutral and not rival,
2. Out of twenty seven *Nakshetras*, the one on which the boy or the girl is born must be either the same or they should not fall in the category of rivals like, '*Devas*'–gods, '*Rakshas*' – demons,
3. The Zodiac chart comprises twelve signs. The boy or the girl must not contain '*Mars*' in 1,4,7, 8, or 12th houses (signs) of their birth charts. In this case the boy or the girl becomes '*Mangli*' and such a boy/girl must have the matching zodiac positions in the chart of their would-be match.

More-ever, the specific planets stationed in a birth chart at ominous positions are known as '*Bala*'. They change according to their position in the birth-chart. This strength is measured as per the following table: -

No.	Particulars	Forces of power (Bala)
1.	*Varnas* - Caste.	One (1)
2.	*Vashya* - Obedience.	Two (2)
3.	*Tara.* - Star/Planet	Three (3)
4.	*Yoni* [1] - Source of all animates	Four (4)

[1] The classes into which animate beings are divided, are known as '*Zi:vI ZA:ts*' in common Kashmiri language and these are considered to be eighty-four lac in number according to the Indian tradition.

5. *Griha Maitri* - Friendship or otherwise of the planets. Five (5)
6. *Jati Maitri* - Defects, if any, due to caste Six (6)
7. *Brikuta* - Zodiac positions. Seven (7)
8. *Nadi Dosh* - Short comings, if any, due to constellation triads. Eight (8)

From the perusal of the above table it is clear that '*Varna*' has the least (one) '*Bala*' and the '*Nadi Dosh*' is at the top of the table having (eight) '*Balas*'. Thus all these make a total of thirty six points of power (adding from 1 to 8, we get, 36) and the girl and the boy must share them proportionately i.e., eighteen in each case or as near to it as possible. Greater disparity between the '*Balas*' of the two is considered inauspicious.

2. Za:tukh Mangna:vun – Formal Request for the Horoscope.

After comparing the birth-charts and after having been satisfied with the details and the family position of all the close relatives of the matching family, a formal request to the parents of the boy is made by the girl's parents for sending the horoscope of the boy through the concerned middleman. While sending the horoscope the father of the girl also send a pitcher of sugar, called '*Na:bad No>T*,' along with some sweets, almonds and some dry-fruit as a present in confirmation of the new relationship. Both the families pay the middleman handsomely for bringing the efforts to the desired end. In case any one among the two parties, is not willing to go ahead, they then stop the efforts there without accepting any gifts.

3. LADdkI / LADki: Wuchun
Formal meeting of the boy and the girl .

After receiving the horoscope from the parents of the boy, the middleman rushes to the residence of girl's parents. Now he starts shuttling between the two families. In the mean time both the families get the birth charts thoroughly scrutinized by the astrologer and after getting his affirmation they arrange a formal meeting between the boy and the girl on an auspicious day. The venue of the function and all the allied matters, like serving of refreshments, exchange of presents between the two families, etc., are the things which are decided upon by both the families with the help of the middleman. Earlier, the function used to be of a very simple nature - just an exchange of a bouquet of flowers with a cash present of rupees 101/- as a token of good-will called, '*Sho>gun*'. The father of the girl and the boy or their representative would exchange vows to stick and stand by the new relationship. Hence this function was named as '*Kasam DrIy,*' or '*Ta:kh Dyun.*' But nowadays this has taken a very pompous form and involves an exchange of many tens of thousands of rupees on both sides in cash and kind including the hotel charges for the lunch/dinner, tea and drinks, etc. Presents for the bride and the bridegroom include golden ornaments, dresses and different suits of clothing for both. The feasting held by the two families, is not less expensive. Both the families invite all the relatives on a feast. In case the boy and the girl do not approve each other, the process of sending gifts stops there and then and all those gifts, if any, exchanged till date, are returned through the middleman together with cost, if any, incurred on the feasting of each others guests etc. But such things happen very rarely. The boat starts floating smoothly in case both the families approve the selection. .

4. GanDun, (Sagayi) - Betrothal, Engagement.

After completing all the formalities, both the families decide to hold the betrothal ceremony and with the help of the middleman and the astrologer the horal moment and an auspicious day is fixed. The parents of the bridegroom purchase a new costly Sari suit, a set of ornaments including a golden *Bindi* (A golden mark for the fore-head, and a bangle known as *'Ba:zband'*, used in place of the *'NA:rivan'* on the occasion), socks, sandals, hankies, etc., for their would be daughter-in-law. All these things are put in a suitcase, which is taken along with on the date of the function. A list of the relatives is made who are selected to accompany the betrothal party. The list is finalized after much deliberation so as to include the most important and close relatives. It should not be too long to invite a bad name to the family. The party accommodates at least two females, preferably sister of the bridegroom and any of the younger aunties. On reaching the residence or the venue of the function the *'a:lath'* ceremony is performed at the main entrance. The party is led to a room or hall already furnished for the guests. They are served milk, tea, soft drinks and snacks etc. It is followed by a heavy lunch. In the mean time the guests from both the side start assembling in the room soon after the lunch. The sister/aunt of the bridegroom calls upon the bride who is asked to wear the ornaments and the new *Sari* suit brought by her in-laws. Thus the fully decorated bride is brought to the main hall where the 'Ring Ceremony' is held. The bride and the bridegroom exchange rings. Niger is burnt and the hall resounds with the clapping by the guests. Greetings are exchanged and there is joy on every face. The function is a mini form of a marriage and involves almost all its hustle and bustle. In case the Ring Ceremony is held in

the forenoon, the guests are served food immediately after the ceremony. Otherwise, salt-tea is served in case this function is held after the lunch in the after-noon. The gusts and the parents of the bridegroom are seen-off by the host as soon as the ceremony is over.

It may be pointed out that the father of the bride pays the sister/aunty of the groom, accompanying the guests, handsomely, either in cash or in the form of a golden ornament. Besides, the younger brother/s sister/s of the groom or the small kids, if any, accompanying the party, are paid cash presents. The father of the girl also hands over a suitcase to the father of the bridegroom that contains the following items: -

1. Cash present for the bridegroom amounting to rupees five thousand or more according to ones economic status or as decided earlier.
2. A complete suit with a night suit for the bridegroom including sewing charges, if any.
3. A present for the groom in the form of a television set/scooter or any other item mutually agreed upon by both the parties.
4. Ten to fifteen packets of sweets weighing at least of two Kg. each, according to ones economic status.

There are, no doubt, some revolutionary people who hold this function in a very simple way without any transactions of money and presents and without any pomp and show or the assembly of any relatives or the like.

At the time of leaving the house of the bride, at least two small kids generally the younger sister of the bride, or her younger brother/cousins, accompany the bridegroom to his house where they are served tea and dinner etc. and on their return journey they are given a cash present of at least rupees 101/-each or more according to ones economic status. Besides, the father of the girl has to return the *'a:lath'* money after doubling it

(paid earlier by the father of the groom at the time of his entrance into the bride's house). He also pays the wages for the coolie who accompanies the betrothal party carrying the trunk/ suitcase, etc., known as '*Mahniv Ha:rI*'.

In this way the two families complete one of the pre-marriage formalities and come more close to each other, and they start making arrangements for the marriage function of their children from hence onwards.

5. *Marriage* - A Historical perspective

Our religious scripture have fixed the four stages of human life they are: -

1 .*Brahamcharya:* The stage of student life devoted to study and learning.
2 *Grahasth* : Married life or the stage of taking up the responsibilities of a house holder.
3 *Va:nprasth* Retired life spent in intense prayers within the limits of the family.
4. *Sannyas* Renunciation and preaching of the scriptures while leading a life of total non-attachment.

As per the life-schedule, every one has to go through all these stages in ones life provided luck favours one with a long life. But for some people married life is the final goal because of their acute attachment to this particular stage of life. When one strictly follows the discipline of married life according to the scriptures, it definitely shall lead one to the higher stages after the stage of married life is over. The scriptures emphasize that a better way of approaching God is through '*Shakti*',

the female energy, which is more compassionate and merciful. It is for of this reason that our scriptures and great Epics put the name of the goddess first,which is followed by the name of the gods. We say 'Sita *Ram*' or '*Radhey Sham*' and not otherwise. This principle is true even today. If we want ascension to the transcendental realms, we have to chant the name of '*Shakti* (in the form of goddess) before we approach the *Shaktiman* (God).

In this way marriage is an important occasion in a man's life. Apparently there appear to be two main reasons why man selects a life partner through marriage. The first and the foremost is to put a check on his sexual behaviour, which would differentiate him from the beasts and thus put him in the list of civilized animates. The other reason appears to be his keen desire to limit the boundaries of his family, which till then was not possible due to his freedom of enjoying sex like a wild beast. In order to achieve this goal and to give a name to his children thus born, he bound himself in a family with a female, which in the long run was called 'marriage'. Thus in the new set up the boundaries of the family were limited and the boy/girl thus born got a family name by his protector [1] It is because of this very fact that the marriages have been given so much importance in almost all the civilizations of the world. There is no denying the fact that the modes of marriage are different in different civilizations but the aim is the same. There may not be even a single sect or race in the world, which does not believe in the validity of marriage. The lust for sex and the desire to have a son as the only support in the old age, are the two more reasons for setting up a family.

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1 *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Ed. By J. Hastings Vol. VIII, P. 423.

The Indian civilization has given a peculiar sanctity to marriage that has now become a part and parcel of our social psyche. It works as a bond for two persons and they become indivisible partners – a couple. The society has owned marriage as a religious and social binding.

During early days, the aim of marriage was to produce a child or more to give continuity to the family and who could also perform the last rites on the death of their parents [1]. The *Smritis* clearly mention the ways in which a couple could get united. The total kinds of marriages have been numbered as eight falling under two major headings each comprising four kinds as per details given below; -

a) Marriages of the High Order:-
   1). *Brahama*, 2) *Deva*, 3) *Arsha*, and
   4) *Prajapatya.*
b) Marriages of the Low Order :-
   1)*Asur,* 2) *Gandarva,* 3) *Rakshasa,* and
   4) *Pishacha.*

All marriages categorized under 'the marriages of the high order' were arranged marriages whereas the marriages under the 'low marriages order' were said to be the marriages by compulsion. The first set of marriages was settled on the basis of wealth, charity, temper/nature and the means of lively-hood. The latter set of marriages was decided on the basis of wars, plunder, theft and forceful abductions. The position of the highest order was given to the '*Brahma*' and '*Manu*' advocated this type of marriage for *Brahmins*. Now this very type of marriage is prevalent among all the Hindus of the sub-continent. The remaining types of marriages do not figure anywhere now

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[1] *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Ed. By J. Hastings Vol. VIII, P. 450

and have been discarded by our society since long. They are not considered as marriages at all in the present set up of the society. There is no denying the fact that a few of the marriage rituals that were observed while performing the above said 'low marriages order', continue to be observed even in our present set-up of marriages. For instance in many parts of the sub-continent the groom keeps a sword attached to his waist while leaving for the marriage along with his *Baratis*. One example is found among the '*Gond*' sect of the tribal people where the groom is asked to catch the fleeing bride at the time of their marriage. If he is unable to catch the girl, the marriage cannot materialize. The marriage is held only after the groom performs this act successfully. This clearly indicates that we have adopted some of the rituals from our diverse marriage patterns to the extent that we are unable to discard or disown them from our present set up of marriages.

The impact of religion must have remained dormant in our early marriage customs/patterns, but with the passage of time and as the castes developed in Hindu society, it must have cast its influence on our marriage customs also. That is why we see some of the religious based praxis in the form of certain rituals becoming more cumbersome than enjoyable. With the development of the caste based society the religious praxis, known as the '*Karma Kanda*' increased in our marriage rituals also because various religious faiths of the society expressed through the rituals, were owned and adopted by the society from time to time. Marriage has been considered as a matter of joy and happiness in our society from the times immemorial and that is why feasting and dancing, assembly of relatives and friends is held on this occasion. The coming of a new member in the family must have made cleaning, whitewashing and decorating the house imperative. These practices appear to have given rise to some of the rituals and customs, which we adhere to even

today. They developed and became more elaborate with the passage of time[1]. In ancient times when there were no religious bindings, the couple must have been bestowing themselves on one another and thus coming more close to each other [2]. We have adopted and retained some of such practices in our present day marriages and adore them even today. A few of such practices can be detailed as under: -

I. *AthIwa:s* - Holding of hands.

On the day of marriage, the groom and the bride are asked to sit for a pretty long time holding the hands of one another in such a way that the right hand of the bride remains in the right hand of the groom and the left one in the left. During all this period they are asked to make a number of promises with each other according to the scriptures.

II. *Lonchi ganD* : Tying of the Bridal Knot

As per the Indian thought, the bridegroom and the bride are asked to circumambulate seven times round the holy fire while tying a knot to the upper garments of the couple and the ritual is known as the '*Granthi Bandhan.*' No such act is prevalent among the marriages of Kashmiri Pandits.

III. *Wachas AthI La:gun*, '*Hriday Sparash*': Touching of the chest.

During the process of marriage, the priest, while splashing Holy Water touches the chest of the bridegroom, makes him to promise that he will look after the wishes of

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1 Panday, Rajbali, *Hindu Sanskar, Varanasi*, 1960, P. 254.
2 Ibid.. P. 259.

his bride and keep adherence to it. This act is also known as, '*Hriday Sparsh*'.

IV. *A:nI Wuchun* - Seeing the reflection in the mirror.

Till recently all marriages were held as arranged marriages and neither the boy nor the girl was allowed to see one another before marriage. Such an act before marriage was considered as a taboo in the civilized society and faith. Religious bindings also did not advocate this practice. The bride and the groom were asked to see one another's reflection in a mirror at the time of marriage. But now a days the boy and the girl enjoy the full liberty from their parents, society and all the near and dear ones to see one another and get acquainted with each other's likes and dislikes before they enter into the matrimonial relationship. But the ritual of seeing one another's reflection in a mirror at the time of marriage still continues. Besides, it is said that mirror reflects the inner feelings of a person and cannot be betrayed by artificiality. In this way if we say that this serves symbolically as the last chance for the boy or the girl to consider their selection finally, may not be an exaggeration. Thus this ritual in a way puts the final stamp on the selection of one another.

V. *Dayi BatI* : Dining together

It is a combination of two words, '*Dayi*'- meaning 'from God' and '*BatI*' meaning 'food'. Thus it means 'God's food'. When all those accompanying marriage party finish feasting including those who had come to receive the guests, the bridegroom and the bride are offered the remnants of the same food, which was served, to the guests from both sides from the ceremonial

kitchen. Here too we see the beautiful idea of serving food first to others and then to ones own self. Food is brought and served by the head cook who waits for this occasion with great expectations. He gets a good gratification from the father of the groom for serving food to the couple on this occasion. The bridegroom and the bride are asked to eat from the same plate in presence of Holy Agni. Besides, curd in a separate bowl, it contains all those dishes, which the host had got prepared for the guests. All this is an attempt to give the couple a chance to know the likes and dislikes and the eating habits of one another.

It is a fact that the rituals of our marriages are very old, as such the actual date of their beginning cannot be specified with certainty. What was the form of our marriages before the time of the *Vedas*, cannot be said with certainty. It is said that the marriages were not as perfect and orderly even up to the age of the *Rgveda*. Scholars are of the view that the marriage customs got their shape and form during the later *Vedic* period [1]. It had formalized all its rites, rituals and customs by the time of the compilation of the '*Sutras*'. It had also adopted nearly all the aspects of the present '*Karma Kanda*' by then. A clear picture of it is witnessed when we study the '*Paraskar*' and '*Ashwalayana Grahisutras*' [2]. A considerable change has occurred in the mode of our marriages since the time of the "*Grahisutras*' but the main functions, rites and rituals are almost the same which were adopted by our ancestors earlier and are still in vogue for the last nearly five thousand years. [3]

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[1] Shastri, Shiv Raj, *Rgvedic Kal Man Parivarik Sambandh*, p. 332.

[2] a) *Pa raskar Grahi Sutra*, I, 8, 11. b) *Ashwalayan Grahi-sutra*, 1 and 6.

[3] Panday, Rajbali. *Hindu Sanskar*, *Varanasi*, 1960. P. 262.

With all the changes in the ritualistic patterns, rituals and customs, it can not be denied that the marriages must have been an act of rejoicing and merry making throughout all the ages. The *Karma Kanda*, our Holy Scriptures and the folk songs connected with some of its rites, bear witness to all these facts.

6. *KhandrIki KIsIm* - Types of Marriages.

There are the following four well known types of marriages prevalent in the valley : -

a) *And pyeTh*: Direct marriage between a boy and a girl.
b). *Andyut*: Marriages based on reciprocity.
c) *TrIkIvAT* : A marriage involving three families.
d) *Gari PyeThi* : To have a resident groom for a girl.

a). And PyeTh : (Direct marriage).

This type of marriage is common these days. In this type of marriage the girl has to leave her parental house and she has to reside in the house of her in-laws along with her husband or both of them choose a separate residence for their future living.

b). Andyut
(*Marriage based on Reciprocity*)

This type of marriage is prevalent among the economically or otherwise backward classes and among the people residing in remote corners of the valley. A boy or a girl not selected for the direct marriage, prefer this type of marriage. The reasons could either be physical, i.e. bodily disability, or economic or social weakness/ taboo. In such a case a boy and a girl of one family are selected

to match a boy and a girl of another family of a similar class. Besides being economically backward families, there is a possibility of the couples being of un-even age groups. Though the parents on both the sides try their best to select such matches very carefully yet disparities exist in such marriages. In view of the fact that every family gives preference to the first type of marriage referred to above, either the boy or the girl (one among the two), is generally of the post or pre marriageable age and thus the parents are left with no alternative but to opt for this type of marriage. In case the girl is aged, her parents choose a family were the boy is above the marriageable age and vice versa. In this way the two families come close to one other with certain mutual agreements. It may be pointed out that this type of marriage was very common in the villages till recently. With the passage of time and with the advent of modern thoughts and education, this type of marriage is now very rare even in the remote areas of the valley.

c). TrIkIvAT –
(Marriages involving Three families.)

Three different families with due consultation with one another exchange their sons/daughters in marriage among their families. It is a mutual understanding between the three families involved that they arrive at a decision of marrying one another's boys/girls. This type of marriage is considered better than the second type of marriage, but is most un-common now-a-days due to the advent of the modern thoughts and development in our society.

d). Gari Pye'Thi' –
(Resident groom for the girl.)

A person who has no male issue and is bestowed with a daughter only and who wants to make his daughter a support for his old age, prefers the selection of a boy for marrying his daughter who agrees to live in the house of the in-laws after the marriage. This type of marriage is, naturally, acceptable to a person who has got more than one or two sons and who can spare one of them for the family that wants to own such a match for their daughter. In the case of such a marriage the groom has to leave his parental house forever and own the in-laws house as his own and reside there permanently after the marriage.

In the remote villages of the valley, such a type of marriage is very common among the peasantry who are in need of more hands at the peak time of their agricultural operations. So they have no alternative but to choose boys for their girls who could be of great help to them in the fields. It is generally observed that such matches prove to be full of deceit and they lure young men for their under-aged daughters and thus use them for some weeks/months of need and then turn them away from their houses. The Kashmiri language is full of a number of folk songs, folk stories, proverbs and riddles that refer to such marriages. The reason behind all this fallacy is the fact that all the agreements in such cases are oral and, as such, all such marriages, in case they ever mature, do not lost long and can be challenged in a court of law as well. It may be pointed out that such deceitful marriages are either an exception among the Hindu families of Kashmir, or in case any such marriage takes place, the concerned parties legally register it.

7. *KhandrIki RasIm* - Marriage Rituals.

Marriage rituals are almost of the same type in the whole of the sub-continent but the celebrations in a Kashmiri-Pandit marriage are extended to a much longer period and the rituals too are lengthy when compared to those observed in the rest of the country. It appears that the impact of '*Arya Samaj*' has been the main cause for doing away with much of the ritualistic portions ōf the *Sanskars.* Since the valley of Kashmir has remained aloof from the rest of the sub-continent due to its natural barriers, the influence of '*Arya Samaj*' did not get any deep roots in the valley. Hence we have the original patterns of marriages which date back to the '*Vedic*' era or the '*Sutra Kal*', The result is that the impact of '*Karma Kanda*' or the ritualistic praxis is very deep on our marriages, *Yagnyopavita* and all other rituals, rites and ceremonies.

The main functions on the eve of marriage can be categorized as under: -

1. *Zyun TsaTun* : Chopping of the fire-wood.
2. *GarI Na:vay* : Cleaning the house.
3. *Dapun* : Extending of invitations/ distribution of invitation cards.
4. *Mus Musrun* : Hair dressing
5. *Kru:l Kharun.* Decoration of the front door.
6. *MA:nzira:th* : The Night of henna.
7. Devgon : The Invocation of the deities.
8. *LAgIn.* : The marriage ritual..

The following table may enable us to understand some of the main rituals and social customs, which form a part of our marriage ceremony now: -

TABLE OF ACTIVITIES

K H A N D A R

(PRE MARRIAGE FUNCTIONS)

Mas Mutslrun/ Hair Dressing			MAnzi Ra:th The night of Henna		Divgo>n		
Va:kh d:an (Oaths and Promises)	Garl Navay (Washing and cleaning)	Dapun (Invitation)	Kru:l Kha:run (Decorating Doors)	MAnz La:glni (Applying Henna)	Kani Shra:n (Bathing Ritual	Homa (Kindling Holy Fire)	Singa:r (Beautification)

KHANDAR / MARRIAGE

AT GROOMS HOUSE				
Lanl Chi::ri` (Official Document of Marriage)	Dasta:r Bandi: (To Put on a Turban)	Vyu:g (Decorated Circle for the Departure of Groom)	Yenivo<l (Marriage Party)	Ko>shal Hom (Thanks Giving)

AT BRIDES HOUSE											
Swa:gat (Welcome)	Jai Ma:la: (Offering Garlands)	Vyu:g (Decorated Circles for Welcome)	Sub (Feasting)	Darl Pu:za: (Oblation At The Door)	Kanya Da:n (Offering the girl in marriage)	Athl-Wa:s (The Hand-Shake)	Saftl - PAdi: (Seven steps the 7 Vows)	Dayi - Batl (Joint Dining)	Poshi Pu:za (Showering the flowers)	Ro>khsat Departure	Praya:chith Penitence

It may be pointed out that we have already discussed in detail the following post-marriage fuhctions/ rituals while dealing with the *Yagnyopavita Sanakar*:

1. *Zyun TsaTun* : Chopping of the fire-wood.
2. KhAri:dAri : Marketing and purchasinmg.
3. *Dapun* : Extending of invitations/ distribution of invitation cards.
4. *GarI Na:vay* : Cleaning the house, and
5. *MA:nzira:th, and Kru:l Kharun* the Night of henna.
6. Dev*go>n*, : The Invocation of the deities, (*Kani Shran* and *Hom*), Ritual Bath, and Offerings to the Sacred Fire

The following items, which have not been dealt with till now, require a special description in the present context: -

a) *To>mul tshaTun* - Cleaning/winnowing of rice, spices and cereals etc.,
b). *Va:kh Da:n* - Final settlement of dates.
c). *Mas MutsIrun* - Hair dressing,
d). *Singa:r(Sa:z Karun)* - Bride's make-up,
e).*LAgnI Chi:ri'* - Official invitation to the Groom's family.

a) To>mul tshaTun – Cleaning/winnowing of rice ,etc

It is a general function connected with all celebrations of religious or social nature. Cleaning of rice is held in all the big and small feasts and functions. On the eve of the marriage of a son or a daughter or on the *Yagnyopavita* ceremony of a son, the function attains greater importance. Generally relatives come of their own accord to help the host for such a type of work when the marriage of a daughter is involved and they wait for a

proper invitation on the marriage of a son. But in the case of *Yagnyopavita,* they consider it a religious duty to help and attend to such jobs on their own without waiting for any invitation. The host fixes an auspicious day for cleaning and winnowing of rice, spices and other ingredients to keep these ready for the function and store them properly in different vessels. The ladies in close relation and of the neighbourhood come and extend their help on such occasions. The best quality of grocery, rice and other eatables are kept separately for special guests '*Baratis*' of the marriage party in case of the marriage of a daughter. All the helpers on this occasion are served special tea and snacks etc., and thus they enjoy the function immensely.

In the same way, during the days gone by, the spices were ground in big and small mortars as the people disliked and discouraged the use of the ready-made crushed spices. Likewise firewood was kept ready ahead of time, as it was the only fuel used for cooking. Due to the paucity of time and easy availability of most of the things in the ready-made form in the market, all these activities appear to be a talk of the past. The availability of L.P.G., cooking utensils of all kinds and sizes on hire, have made cooking easy as well as time saving for the host and the cooks as well. Now, we do not have any singing or '*VanIvun*' on such occasions. Such '*VanIvun*' is now sung on the eve of either marriage or *Yagnyopavita.* A sample of the type of '*VanIvun*' that was in vogue till recently on such occasions is given below for reference: -

Zyun tso>T janglan da:ni mun ga:man
Ma:man hyAtsnay bAD hyamtha: ,
Ba:smati' to>mlas kanI Da:la:n chi:
So>ndarI chi Ma:linyan sanz kara:n.
Navi lari kA:ni: tsandan da:r chuy
Go>Dnyuk ka:r chuy shu:b yi: nay.
A:nganas sA:nis shA:di:ya:nay

BA:di:ya:nay mushikh tra:va:n.
Yazman bihith pyeThimis po<ras
Masa:lI bo<ras ganD mutsIra:n
Masa:lI dAgiv so>nIvyan kanzan
Ro>pIvyan parnyan chonu:yo.
GandarvI[1] *chi: vanva:n ganDri chi: tsye'Ta:n,*
So>ndrI chi ma:linyuk sanz kA:ra:n
Yazman BA:yi:Yazman chuy kara:n bu:li:
Masa:lI wa:lun tu:li' tu:li:

The translation of these lines is as under:-
Fire-wood was chopped from forests and
Paddy was got pounded in villages,
And your maternal uncle showed mush courage.
We are removing the grit from '*Basmati*' rice,
And beautiful ladies are preparing for their parental houses.
The upper story of the house has sandalwood fittings,
And it is your first endeavor of this nature,
May God bless you to come out with flying colours?
There is all merriment in our compound;
The aniseed is giving out its fragrance.
The host is sitting on the uppermost storey,
And he is untying the heavy pack of spices.
We grind the spices in golden mortars and
Strained it with silver sieves.
The nymphs are singing and grinding the spices,
And the beauties are preparing for their parental houses.
Oh hostess, the host is explaining to you through his gestures,
To bring the spices with care and in small quantity.

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[1] A celestial musician, a class of singers among the gods.

b. *Va:kh Da:n-* Final settlement of dates.

The marriage function of a daughter starts from the date of unlocking the hair of the bride. But prior to that the father of the groom and of the bride meet one another for mutual consultations to fix the dates for various ceremonies connected with the marriage of their wards. The function of the meeting of the two is known as '*Vakh Dan'*. It is a combination of two words, both originating from the Sanskrit language. '*Vakh*' means 'word' and '*Dan*' means 'giving'. In this way, besides finalizing the other matters for holding the marriage function, they exchange a word and fix the final date for the marriage. Hence, '*Vakh Dan'*. In the *Rgveda* and the '*Narada Smriti*[1]' we have a reference to this ritual. As such, it is not a fact that this function is a recent addition to the celebrations of the marriages in Kashmir[2] as put forward by some people. Sir Walter Lawrence has clearly confirmed this fact in his book, '*The Valley of Kashmir'* and he is of the view that this function of social importance was prevalent in Kashmir since times immemorial.[3]

C. *Mas MutsIrun* : Hair dressing.

This is one of the most important functions at the bride's house as no such function is held at the groom's house where the marriage actually starts from the date of '*GarI Na:vay'* i.e. washing/cleaning of the house. The bride takes a hot water bath in the morning. She is given the best available soap for cleaning. Previously wheat husk mixed with curd was rubbed on the whole body of the bride so as to make her skin clear and soft.

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[1] Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Varanasi, 1960, P. 264.
[2] *Keys To Kashmir*, Lalla Rukh Publications, Srinagar, 1953. P. 29.
[3] Lawrence ,Walter , *The Valley of Kashmir*, London, 1895 , P. 260

Now a day this job is done at a beauty parlour. Besides, treating her body, her hair is thoroughly and minutely washed or dyed and given a special treatment. Various kinds of creams, powders and perfumes are made use of. Her hands, arms and feet, and her nails are given a special treatment. For the first time she makes use of a colourful and glittering '*Bindi*' so as to look like a bride from the *Divgo>n* ritual onwards.

The ceremony has been in practice in the valley since times immemorial and we find a reference to this ritual in our '*Grahisutras*'.[1] From this very day starts the '*VanIvun*' and singing in the house. Some of the lines of '*VanIvun*' are quoted here :

Ba:zIrI animay fAlilI tI hiye',
Ku:ri: wa:rI wa:rI malA:ye'.
Landan ye'li gAye's tsandan hAT tA:rmay,
Tathi garInA:vmay kangni han.
VasIdi:v Razni cha:nay wa:nay,
Ku:r chakh Divki: maje' hAnz.
RIkhmani o>nunay gAtshithIy pa:nay,
Mo>khtay da:nay vurA:se'.
Kangni cha:ni chi sonI sIndi' bAriye'
HA:riye' lyu:khuy Vye'wa:h ka:l.
Rum chi: zA:vili' sum sye'z drA:yi:,
Sharika: A:yi: wAnkI pa:rhe'.

As already pointed out, the '*Divgo>n*' of a bride involves some more rites than that of the groom. She receives a number of dowry items from her father on the eve of this *Sanskar*. Under the '*Goadan*' ritual, her friends and relatives decorate her hair. Stress has been laid in our scriptures not to cut short the hair of ladies and girls. The hair, according to our scriptures, is considered essential for our women folk just like wearing of a *Yagnyopavita* is held for the males. The common saying is, '*Mas chu vas*', meaning, 'Hair is the best ornament' for a lady.

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[1] Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Varanasi, 1960, P. 264.

The above quoted lines include the word 'London' which is a clear indication that this is a recent addition. The translation of these lines is as under: -

> Oh sweet heart, I got the special hair oil from the market,
> Oh my daughter, I shall apply it gently on you ,
> When I visited London last, I got a piece of Sandal-wood and
> I got prepared a comb out of it.
> It was prepared at the carpenter's- shop of king *Vasudeva,*
> You are the daughter of mother *Devaki.*
> *Roukhmani* herself brought it.
> Thread up the pearl beads in it.
> Your comb has the golden teeth,
> Oh merle your marriage has already been settled,
> Your hair is very thin and also smooth.
> And goddess *Sharika* has come herself to make your braid.

After the *'VanIvun'* is over, tea or drinks, as may be the requirement of the hour, is served to all those present and then starts the singing and dancing programme which lasts for the whole night.

It is followed with the functions and rituals like '*MA*:nzi *Ra:th', 'Divgon'* and making of offerings to the holy fire, known as '*Hawan*' or '*Homa*' and all these have already been discussed under the *Yagnyopavita Sanakar.*

d. *Singa:r (Saz Karun)*-Bride's Make-up.

After finishing the '*Kani Shra:n*' and the '*Homa*', starts the decoration and make-up of the bride when she puts on the ornaments made for her by her parents. Our folk songs give a poetic description regarding the preparation and wearing of these ornaments. Some of the lines are quoted here: -

De'jho>r go>rmay Ve'jibra:rye',[1]
Ma:ji so>mbro<vuy cha:vI tI shokay,
MA:li garIno<vuy HawIsay sa:n.
Satan Moharan Dye'jho>r kas kori kyutuye',
Yas kori gumI Dali bumI khanjras.[2]

The translation of these lines is as under:-

I mended your '*Dejho>r*'(a hanging ear ornament) from *Bijbihara,*
Your mother had saved for it all through willingly with keen desire,
And the father prepared it joyfully.
The ear ornament costing seven gold coins for the daughter
Whose (dagger like) beautiful eyebrows are to get sweaty very soon? (The girl with the beautiful eyebrows is to face the hardships of a family-life very soon).

On the same night the bride is decorated for the wedding, which is to take place early next morning. The first thing to do is to decorate her with a headgear, known as '*TarangI*', which comprises: -

1. A cap with costly brocade fitted skullcap,
2. Inner fine linen short covering with golden embroidery work on its two sides with a depression in the center at the head side to fit on the cap called, '*Zu:ji*'.
3. Ribbon type white cloth, wrapped over the border of the skull-cap called, '*TarangI La:Th*'
4. White glittering paper ribbon, called '*Mo>harI La:Th*' covering the cloth ribbon, and,

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1 A town nearly forty five km to the south of Srinagar city on the Jammu –Srinagar National Highway. Its ancient name is recorded as '*Vijay Vihar*', but in the common Kashmiri language it is known as '*Vejibror*'. In the revenue records, it is named as '*Bijbihara*'.

2 It is a poetic as well as proverbial description meaning that the beautiful girl who has to under go through all the hazards of a family-life, very shortly.

5. A white transparent plastic ribbon covering the paper ribbon, called '*Shi:shi La:Th*', and
6. A few pins having black heads for fastening the ribbons to the head-gear on the right and the left sides of the skull.

First of all the cap is put on the head. It is then covered with short fine linen cloth, '*Zu:ji,*' so that the glittering and embroidered two side of it cover the ears partly and its tail falls on the back of the bride. Then the cloth ribbon is wound layer by layer round the skullcap. It is covered with the shining paper ribbon and finally by transparent plastic ribbon. In the end it is fastened by two black/gold plated or even golden needles on the two sides near the ear-tops. It is an ancient headgear, which a few of our old ladies wear even today. But due to the change in dress code among the ladies of Kashmiri Pandits, this type of headgear is becoming very rare. The only difference between the bridal head-gear and an ordinary one, is that the outer long linen, that extended up to the feet in a curved shape of a common headgear, is not used in the case of the bride as she wears a '*Sari*' dress on the eve of the marriage now. The wearing of the headgear '*TarangI*' is now just a ritual only. With the disappearance of this type of dress code, the experts in making such headgears are rare. Therefore, the expert on the eve invites a special attention. She is given a '*Zang*' and some gratifications. Every body congratulates the host and the hostess at this hour of joy and happiness. Every one expresses his own joy and happiness at this hour. Every one wishes a prosperous family life for the bride. These ideas are repeatedly found in our folk songs, which our ladies sing on this special occasion. Here a few lines are quoted for reference: -

Taranga: go>nDmay ga:hI lo>guy tra:vIne',
ta:h ko>rnay Ma:ji Bhawa:ne'.
TarangI go>nDmay dAchine: da:re',
Ha:re' gatshun wA:riv wo>ni'.

Taragas chA:nis so>nI sIndi tykiye'
Latiye' DyakI bAD dra:ye'ham.

Translation:

I arranged your headgear in such a way that it started glittering,
It was folded by Mother goddess *Bhawani* herself.
I made your '*TarangI*' starting from the right side,
Because the Merle has to go to her in-laws now.
Your headgear has the golden specks on it,
Oh young lady you have proved to be very fortunate.

All the female and the young members of the family remain busy in singing and dancing for the whole night, whereas the elder male members of the house are busy with the cooks in the ceremonial kitchen or they are preparing for the next day's reception of the *Barat.* The bride is asked to retire to an adjacent room for taking rest for the remaining part of the night, as she has to remain fully active for completing the marriage rituals next day. In this way this ritual comes to an end.

e. *LAgnI Chi:ri'* :
Official Invitation to the Groom and his Family.

Also known as '*LagnI ChAndrika*', this is virtualiy the last pre-marriage function held at the residence of the groom. It is generally held a day or more, prior to the date of the marriage, provided the day is an auspicious one and is agreed to by both the families. On this date the *Kula Guru* of the daughter's side attends the groom's house with a properly framed and printed portrait of any of the common gods with spouse in a '*Jai Mala*' posture [1]. Besides, it includes the details about the Zodiac positions at the time of the marriage with other details

[1] Previously the portraits were hand made—but now printed and ready-made portraits are available in the market for the purpose.

regarding the number of invitees and proper timings for performing various marriage rituals. On his arrival at the main gate, he has to go through the *'a:lath'* ceremony. Here he has to pay a cash of rupees 101/- or more as the *'a:lath'* money to the lady of the house performing this ritual of his entering the groom's house. This amount is paid back to him in double when he leaves that house after performing the ritual. He is respectfully led to a well furnished/decorated room, where he is served milk/tea, etc., according to his choice. He is offered the best of the sweets and confectionary/ bakery items. After finishing his tea, he uncovers the portrait and reads its contents to all those present on the occasion. While explaining the importance of this function he relates its origin from the *'Shiva Lagan'*, *'Shiva Parinay'* and *'Narada Smriti'* etc., that include such references of *Narada* who acted as a mediator between the *Shiva* and the father of *Parwati* for arranging their marriage. The *Kula Guru* blesses the couple whose names figure in this marriage document. Soon a packet of sweets, some bakery items, two or more Kg of sugar and a *'Tha:l'* of rice with a packet of salt and some money for *'Zang'* purposes, is brought before the *Kula Guru* for completing the ritual, called *'pre'pyun'*. The groom is invited and asked to perform this *'Puja'* and *'Naived'* is afterwards distributed among all those present there. What remains is packed and handed over to the priest. Here a cash payment by the father of the groom is made to him as *'Dakshina'* according to the economic position and social status of the family. Besides, paying the taxi charges, etc., the amount of the *'a:lath'* is returned to him. He offers a portion of the *'Naived'* etc., to the bride's parents on his return journey and informs them about the details of his visit to the groom's house.

There are a number of folk songs about this function. A few lines are quoted here: -

GAgnuk do>h khot lAgnIchi ra:she',
KA:shi: Andruk Brahmun a:v.

Yi: ko>r Vallba:yi Ganish Ra:zastay ………,
Tati a:yi Di:shith yati ko>r ka:r
RIkhmani li:chinam Krishnas LAgnay chi:ri [1]
Brihaspath sa:tay yor hyath a:v

Translation :

The day of the marriage was settled as per the Zodiac signs in the heavens.
The *Brahmin* from *Kashi* [2] has arrived
The same ritual was performed when *Valabha* [3] was married to *Ganesha*. (The *Brahmin*…)
There we saw this function and practiced it here at our place
Roukhmani [4] had got written this paper on the marriage of *Krishna,*
Jupiter has come along with it on the auspicious occasion. (The *Brahmin*…….,)

In this way all the pre-marriage functions and rituals of day-to-day gatherings come to an end in both the houses and the final day of the marriage arrives. It is a day of utmost importance for both the families because of the fact that the social gatherings and celebrations involved in both the families are totally celebrated in two different ways, (In the house of the bride and the groom respectively). As such, it will be in the fitness of things to deal with these separately.

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[1] It is known as '*Lagna Chandrika*' in the scriptures. This has changed into '*LagnI Chi:ri* in the Kashmiri language.
[2] The Brahmins from Kashi have a special respect in our folk songs.
[3] Valabha the spouse of Lord Ganesha.
[4] *Raukhmani* The spouse of Lord Krishna.

Chapter Five

*MARRIAGE - **Main Functions***

(a) Main functions at the groom's house :-

1. *Dasta:r BAndi:, (SeharI GanDun)* – Designing the Turban.
2. *Vyu:g,* The decorated circle.
3. *Bara:t, (Yani Wol),* The Marriage party.

1. Dasta:r BAndi: : Designing of the Turban.

After shaving and bathing the groom wears the wedding dress, which is followed by binding of the turban. This task is done either by the elder paternal uncle or by the elder brother-in-law (sister's husband). The '*Zang*' ceremony is followed on this occasion also. In view of the fact that binding of the turban is now not a common feature among the males as it was common in the recent past, the host invites the services of an expert for this purpose[1]. After completing the designing of the turban, a black-headed needle is pressed into the front tip of the turban just to avoid evil or witchcraft. Finally, the *Kula Guru* applies a Saffron mark on the forehead of the groom and thus he is ready to lead the marriage procession. It is a busy time for the ladies of the house who burn Niger in the decorated fire pot. The cameramen and the video-man are no less busy. The host is busy noticing and examining the arrival of each and every guest so that no body is left from the list of invitees who are to accompany the '*Barat.*' All the people assemble in the courtyard. The man with the conch-shell makes occasional sounds on the conch so as to inform the groom that the guests have assembled. A man with a decorated umbrella, called '*ChAthIr*' can

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[1] - Now-a-days ready-made turbans are available in the market for the grooms.

also be seen beside the conch-man. In the meantime the groom proceeds toward the '*Vyu:g*'[1]. All the means of transporting the guests to the venue of the function are decorated with garlands of flowers and buntings. The car of the groom receives special care. It is decorated more artistically. The whole area is full of well wishers and spectators. All the young ladies of the family and the relatives sing the folk songs of the hour in to-and-fro -- '*Rov*' form on the Muslim pattern, while the elderly ladies continue their traditional folk singing, '*VanIvun*'.

2. *Vyu:g* : The decorated circle, (At the Groom's House).

An expert artistically lays a decorated circular design on the ground with the coloured lime powders. A plate filled with rice, a coin and a cake of '*VAr*' is put on it. The groom comes and stands on it facing towards the east. The grand mother/mother, first of all completes the '*a:/ath*' ceremony of the groom which is followed by moving over his head a '*tha:li*' containing seven number of lamps made of rice-flour lit after applying ghee in its cotton wicks. These lamps are called, '*RAtnI tsA:ngi*'[2] (Pearl lamps). Then he is offered a little sugar candy three times. All the members of the family, friends and close relatives garland the groom with a variety of flowers and ready-made colourful tinsel paper garlands fitted with currency notes. Last of all a special ribbon is

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[1] A circular place decorated with different coloured lime stone powder as already explained under the heading *Yagnyopavita.*

[2] Seven lamps (like the earthen lamps) of raw rice flour with its cotton wicks dipped in gee are burnt and kept in a '*tha:li*' which is circulated over the head of the groom three times when he arrives on the '*Vyu:g*'. These are called '*RAtnI tsA:ngi*' in the common Kashmiri language

tied on his turban called '*Manan Ma:l*'[1]. From here the groom is taken in a procession to a temple to pay his reverence to the deity. His family members, the conch-man, the man carrying the specially decorated umbrella, called *'ChAthIr'* and some of the invitees accompany him. On his return from the temple, he is led to the car decorated for him and thus the whole party starts for the venue of the marriage function. The host once again checks the guests so as to ensure that all the invitees have boarded the vehicles meant for them.

In the meantime the ladies go on singing the '*VanIvun*' and '*Rov*' which highlights the importance of the '*Vyu:g*'. Some of the lines are quoted here: -

Vyu:g lyu:khu:yo sami sami jaye',
Sha:ye' shri: Bhagwa:na:ye'.
Vyu:g lyu:khu:yo sattay rangay,
Zange' a:yo Parmi:shwar.
Vyi:gis chA:nis shura:h garay,[2]
MA:nz , mare'd[3] *VurA:yo.*
Vyu:g lyu:khu:yo Siryi praka:sho,
Naqa:sh Animy le'khA:ne'.

The translation of these lines is :-

The demarcated circle was made on the plain ground just near the place of Almighty.
The '*Vyu:g*' was drawn with seven colours,
God Himself performed the '*Zang*' ceremony.

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[1] The word '*Manan*' originates from the Sanskrit language and means, ' thoughtfulness', or ' consideration' and '*Mal*' means ' a garland'. In view of the fact that groom enters a new stage of family life from this date, hence called, '*Manan Mal*'.

[2] It is the translation of Sanskrit words, 'Shodasha Kala'. On the full moon night the moon is considered as complete, comprising all the sixteen parts of its diameter.

[3] The old Kashmiri name for the limestone is '*Mared*'. As the white lining demarcated certain 'boundaries', known in Sanskrit as, '*Mariyada*'. The word seems directly derived from the word '*Mariyada.*'.

Your '*Vyu:g*' is complete with all the sixteen portions of moon (*Shodasha Kala*).
And decorated with the henna and the lime stone powder.
The *Vyu:g* has been drawn under the broad day (sun) light,
Several artists were engaged to make it.

The ladies of the house accompany the groom up to the car while singing the folk songs and after the procession leaves, they return and start singing and dancing on the '*Vyu:g*' just now vacated by the groom. The hostess also takes part in this singing and dancing along with other ladies of the house. This type of song is sung in short and quick rhythm and the words like '*Sonder*' and '*HA:r*' are replaced with the names of the ladies and the relatives participating in the dancing. The couplets are recorded here: -

SormI lodum shi:shas andar,
So>ndar wAtsIm natsA:ne'.
HA:r watsIm natsIne', sA:r sonI sInzIye'.
Ha:ri gatse'm JumkI Ju:ri', so>ti sInzIye'.

Translation:
The collyrium was put into a bottle,
The beautiful one has got up to dance.
The Merle, that too golden one, has stood up to dance,
The merle wants earrings, those too made of gold.

The ladies accompanying the groom up to his car, start returning and on their way back they sing the following song: -

LAkhimi: sA:ti' sA:ti' Ro>pI Bo>wA:ne',
SonI ma:l mo>khtI ma:l tshIni tas nA:li:.
So>nI ja:mI gAnDinas Koshalya:ye',
Sha:mI rI:pI Ra:mI gatshi SI:ta:ye'.
VasishTh tI Brahma: Vi:d para:n dra:ye',
Brahma:, Veshin tI I:shwar dra:v.
Namaska:r bo>vinay KaramIli:kha:ye'[1]*,*

[1] She is the goddess of fate in charge of deciding marriage.

(Sha:ml RI:pl.....)
YAndra;zI DarmIra:zI Varuk[1] *anda:zay,*
Cha:v kara:n Ki:ki: vanIva:n dra:ye',
Bharath ra:zI Sho>turgo>n rathI hyath dra:ye',
(Sha:ml RI:pl ....)

The translation of these lines is as under: -

The goddess of wealth accompanying *Ro>plBhawa:ni* [2] garlanded him with gold and pearls.
Kaushalya offered the golden brocade[3].
The black beauty *Rama* has gone to bring *Sita.*
(Maharshi) Vasishtha [4] and *Brahma* came reciting the *Vedas,*
Brahma, Vishnu and God Himself have proceeded (towards the venue of the marriage.)
Our hand folded salutations are to the goddess of fortune, (The black beauty..)
The marriage party of the groom looked as if the Procession of *Dharma Raja,* [5] god *Indra*
Wishful *Kaiki:* followed them while singing folk songs.
King *Bharat* and *Shaturgun* [6] accompanied along with the chariots (The black..)

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[1] One of the names attributed to the groom

[2] The eighteenth century saint poetess of Kashmir also known as '*Ro>pl Ded*' or '*Alkeshawari*'. More than one hundred and fifty '*Vakhs*' are attributed to this mystic poetess explaining the secrets of *Shaiva* and *Vaishnava* philosophies simultaneously. She is revered by the people of Kashmir as the incarnation of goddess '*Sharika*' P.S., *Rupl Bhawani–Akh Sa:m* by S.N.Pandit, Post-graduate Department of Kashmiri, Kashmir University, Srinagar, 1983

[3] She is the mother of Lord *Rama.*

[4] *Vasistha,* is one of the ancient sages of India. He has compiled the '*VasishtTha Purana.*' Also known as '*Yog Vasishtha*'.

[5] He is considered an epithet of *Yama,* who judges virtues and sins of a person after death, and awards hell or heaven according to ones deeds. Hence called *Dharamaraja.* King *Yodishthara* of the famous epic *Mahabharata* too was called as '*Dharmar–Raja*' for his truthfulness and virtues.

[6] Both of them are the cCharacterss ofin the epicthe *Ramayana* and the stepbrothers of Lord *Rama.*

3. *Barat : (Yani Wo<l) :* Marriage Party.

The marriage party comprises all the close relatives and friends. The newly weds, the in-laws and the neighbours are give a special preference while making selerction. The family members and the host consider it their duty to seat them well in various vehicles of transport. Every care is taken for their smooth journey. The procession starts from the house of the host and it is lead by the car by which the groom travels. All the way the other vehicles remain very close to the groom's car so that they reach to the venue of the function in time and in a procession. Here too the groom has to pay his first reverence to the deity in a nearby temple. The rest of the guests wait out side the venue of the function till the return of the groom from the temple. The people who reach direct to the place of the function and are the guests of the groom, have to wait out side till the arrival of the *Barat.* The groom heads the *'Barat'* party and they enter the venue. At this time too the conch-man and person carrying the decorated umbrella, *'ChAthIr'* flank the groom. It appears as if a king is entering his court in the accompaniment of his courtiers. The conch-man blows the conch repeatedly informing the new host about the arrival of the groom. From here start the functions at the house of the bride.

b) Main functions at the Bride's house.

The main pre-wedding and marriage functions and rituals at the residence of the bride can be classified as under: -

(I) Pre-marriage functions/rituals :-

1. *Swa:gat* - Reception
2. *Jai Ma:la*: - Bride and groom garlanding one another

3. *Vyu:g* : Decorated circular pattern laid on the ground
4 *Sab* : Feasting the guests.
5.*Da:rI Pu:za:* : Obeisance at the door.
6.*Kanya: Da:n (Kani Da:n)* : Giving away the girl.
7.*Yoni Po>rud* : Casting the Holy Thread to the groom by the father-in-law.
8 *GangI Ve's*; : Personification of *Ganga* in the form of a friend .
9. *AthI Wa:s* : Holding of hands.
10. *La:yi Bo<y* : The Spotless Brother
11. *SaftI PAdi:* : The seven steps - seven vows.
12. *Abi:d* : Receiving alms.
13. *Pa:ran Du:ni* Offering walnuts.
14. *Dayi batI* : :Sharing of the food '*Naive 'd*'.
15. *Poshi Pu:za*: : Showering flowers on the couple.

1. *Swa:gat* - Reception.

On reaching the venue of the function, the groom is followed by his close family members, his maternal relatives, flanked by the conch and the man holding the '*ChAthIr*' and all his friends. The video men and the photographers enter the venue first to make the arrangements for their respective recordings. All the guests from the bride's house stand in a queue on both sides of the lane in order to welcome the groom and the marriage party. The father/grand father of the bride is at the head of the party ready with garlands of flowers. He, after garlanding the groom, proceeds towards the father/grand father of the groom and after garlanding them he welcomes the other close relatives. All this takes place in a very happy mood and after hugging the close

ones, he leads the guests to the large canopy or the hall, which is already decorated to receive them. Besides the fathers of the couple, the uncles (maternal an well as paternal) of both the families meet and garland each other. The groom is led directly to the dais on which two well-decorated chairs are placed. He occupies one of the chairs; the other chair to his left is kept un-occupied for the bride. All the guests sit in the chairs arranged in the hall on all sides in a well-organized manner. The guests of the brides' side too sit in this very hall and they generally occupy the back seats. In the mean time a few boys enter the hall with trays of soft drinks if the marriage is held during summer months. The drinks are served to one and all according to ones choice. Light refreshment cum breakfast comprising tea/Saffron-flavoured black tea called '*QhAvI*' with biscuits, cheese *Pakora* and some salty snacks follow. Photographers and video cameramen are all busy in covering all the major events that take place in the hall. In the mean time the bride arrives and she is lead to the dies by her friends and there she occupies her seat. Most of the video and camera coverage is given to the people who come to greet the groom and the bride. The couple is served milk preferably in silver cups and saucers. They are served some sweets '*Bufri*' with milk, as they have to keep a fast till their marriage rituals are completed.

2. Jai Ma:la: -
Bride and Groom Garlanding one another

In the meantime two young girls of the bride's family come to the venue with two big '*Thalis*' carrying two bulky garlands of flowers known as, '*Jai Ma:la/:*' Facing each other, the bride and the groom get up and take the garlands in their hands and the groom garlands the bride first and then she garlands the groom while all the

guests, present in the hall, clap loudly. It is a hectic time for the photographers and video makers. The hall/canopy remains filled to its full capacity during all this period. The hosts, the guests and their families exchange greetings.

In the meantime the ladies continue their '*VanIvun*' in a room adjacent to the main hall. The songs of this hour, besides being humorous and exciting, are also satirical in case there is any draw back on the part of the groom or the guests accompanying the *Barat*. To quote an instance, on the late arrival of the groom, they repeat: -

Vushi'kI dra:yi hye'li tai da:ni kar pu:re',
Du:ryuk yaniwo<l kar wa:te'.

Translation:

How could paddy crop suffice? The ears of barley have started sprouting.

When shall the marriage party from a far-flung area reach here?

There is long time-gap between the ripening season of barley and the season for setting of the paddy plantation. Thus the lines quoted show a long time for which the people of the bride's family had to wait due to the late arrival of the groom. Besides these lines clearly show that rice could not suffice for the full year to satisfy the hunger of the common man. During the days of autocracy the major portion of this crop was taken by the Government and the landlords as their share with the result the man who produced it, was left to starve. In order to save himself from starvation and hunger, he sowed barley as a fodder crop. Thus the peasant ate barley and its husk was used as fodder. The Government or the landlord would impose tax on the animal but growing fodder was exempted from any tax.

On the arrival of the groom every body feels happy and excited and ladies sing the following folk song: -

Ko>hI tall dra:kho no>nuye',
Brahma ji ko>niye' sozu:yo.
GahI pyav da:re'n tai darwa:zan,
Mahara:zI a:v tI tsa:v baji da:re'.
Ra:zI po>thur tsa:kh ma:li baDi darwa:zay,
Kyamkha:bI wathurmay preth sha:ye'.
Hastis chA:nis thAz ambA:ri:[1]*,*
PrItshitos kami ba:zA:ri: a:v.
Ya:ro wA:tsIy BAgi tai Du:li:[2]*,*
Zanak ra:zIni Ku:ri:ye'.

The translation of these lines is as under:

You appeared behind the mountain (just like the sun),
Brahma, the Creator, was sent to you as the messenger.
The doors and the windows became bright,
The groom came and entered through the big gate.
You entered like a prince, my dear, through the big door,
We kept the brocade spread everywhere.
Your elephant has a high canopy,
Ask him through which streets did it come?
Oh my friend, tell the daughter of King *Janak* (father of *Sita*, the spouse of Lord *Ram*),
The chariot and the palanquin have come for you.

Welcoming of the marriage party has been in vogue in the sub–continent since times immemorial. The guests and the groom on their first arrival were served with a soft drink. It was a mixture of honey and water flavoured with saffron. In the present set up of the marriage rituals we perform this ritual in a mini form on the eve of

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[1] From the root Sanskrit word, '*Ambari*', meaning a small canopy used by the royalty while they sit on their elephants.
[2] A kind of closed litter used to carry brides and ladies of well-to-do families.

'*Kanya:da:n*' ceremony wherein the drink is offered to the new couple by the father of the bride. We get reference of this kind of welcome in the *Atharva Veda,*[1] the *Grahisutras*[2] and the *Shiva Purana*. It is known as '*Madhu Park*'[3] The father and the mother of the bride now complete this function when they pay their blessings to the groom soon after the '*Kanya:da:n*'- when they offer their daughter in marriage to the groom.

On the arrival of the marriage party, the father of the bride and the groom meet and greet one another which is called, '*Milni*' as per the Indian way of marriage. The ladies who sing the '*VanIvun*' express it in the following words: -

So>ni tsa:v a:ngan lAgnIki hi:tay,
Bu:tan Di:v ma:li ratI chyape'.
So>ni so>ni mi:li: manz poshiwa:re',
Myul gov totas tI van ha:re'.

Translation

The Father-in-law (of our daughter) has entered the courtyard with the excuse of marriage,
My son, it is as if the gods are being sacrificed for the demons,
The two Fathers-in-law meet each other in the midst of flower garden,
It was a meeting, as if, between the parrot and the wild merle.

Till recently seating arrangement for serving lunch to the guests was made under a canopy, which involved much labour besides being time consuming. Now the standing lunch/ dinner buffet is kept ready for the guests who arrive and eat according to their choice and liking. This has lessened the burden of the host

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1 *Atharva Veda*, 12 – 14
2 *Paraskar Grahisutra*, 32, 3.1.

3 Bhatt, Pt. Keshov, *Mekhala pustak*, *Vivah Vidi*, 1925, P. 23

besides being economical and involving less wastage and labour.

After completing the '*Jai Ma:la:*', it is the time for '*Da:rI Pu:za*', but prior to that the couple is required to complete the '*Vyu:g*' function. Thus the groom and the bride are asked to proceed towards the '*Vyu:g*'.

3. *Vyu:g-*

Decorated circular pattern laid on the ground.

After completing the '*Jai Mala:*' function, the guests start proceeding towards the hall where the arrangement for their lunch has been made by the host. The bride and the groom are led to the place where the '*Vyu:g*' function has been arranged. The persons with the '*ChAthIr*' and the conch shell accompany the couple. The person with the '*ChAthIr*' remains just behind the groom and the conch man blows the conch occasionally to inform the people of the arrival of the '*Shah*', the 'King' as the groom is called on the occasion. The gait of the groom and the scene remind one of ancient aristocracy which is now a thing of the past. Previously the function of '*Jai Mala*' was held in a Kashmiri- Pandit marriage, and the bride was brought by her maternal uncle up to the '*Vyu:g*' and he would request the father of the groom for the double shawl, commonly called '*DusI*' for bringing the bride wrapped in it. Now this function is completed by the maternal uncle by just placing the shawl on the bride's shoulders and leading her up to the '*Vyu:g*'. On the '*Vyu:g*' are kept two earthen plates, called '*TA:ki*' filled with rice, a coin and a piece of '*VAr*' on each of them. The couple stand on the '*Vyu:g*' facing east and the bride stands to the left side of the groom. The grand/mother-in-law of the groom comes and performs the '*a:lath*' ceremony and the father of the groom pays for this

'a:lath' which is re-paid to him in double, at the time the bride leaves for the groom's house. It is followed with the ritual, *'RatnI tsA:ngi'* [1]. The lamps thus lit are moved over the heads of the groom and the bride [2] three times. Then the ribbons tied on the headgear of the bride and the turban of the groom, are exchanged. The groom's ribbon is tied to the brides and vice versa, known as changing of the *'Manan Malas'*. Last of all they are offered a piece of *'Barfi'* or sugar candy, which the bride and the groom have to eat three times simultaneously. First of all it is offered to the groom and then to the bride alternately. Here the groom is again garlanded by those who have not been able to do so earlier, and thus ends the function of the *'Vyu:g'* on the arrival of the groom for marriage to the bride's house. It may be pointed out that during the days gone by, the bride and the groom used to enter the hall/canopy where the seating arrangement for the guests was arranged by the host for serving the lunch, after completing the *'Vyu:g'* function. This has undergone a change in the present set-up because earlier the *'Vyu:g'* ritual was completed on the arrival of the groom and the marriage party prior to serving of break fast to the guests at the venue of the function.

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[1] These are the lamps resembling the earthen lamps in structure but are made of rice flour and fitted with the cotton wicks soaked in ghee .

[2] Previously the grooms had to travel all the distance up to the bride's house either on a horseback or on foot as the facilities of the modern transport were not available. In this way there was every apprehension of his having come under the influence of some evil spirits. The *'a:lath'* and the *'RatnI tsA:ngi'*, ceremony was held just to ward off the evil spirits.

4. *Sab* - Feasting the guests

The ladies at the '*VanIvun*' room continue singing the folk songs all this time. The folk songs concerning the hour of feasting comprise three categories, namely: -.

a) *Asun tI TasnI*, - Humorous and satirical songs,
b) *Sa:l*, - Feasting the guests, and
c) *Samaj Sudhar*,- Social reform.

a) Asun tI TasnI- Humorous and Satirical songs

Humour and satire are an essential element of expressing happiness and merrymaking. This is a common feature among a number of existing world civilizations. The Greeks too had this practice on such occasions. It is of its unique nature in the whole sub-continent and Kashmir is not an exception. No doubt, it is not followed so vigorously in Kashmir as it is pursued in other parts of the sub-continent, mostly in the north and northwestern parts of the country. The Kashmiri society is considered one of the most civilized societies of the world, so it has not always associated itself with any such vulgarity. Thus the songs depicting such satirical ideas have always been used in a very polite and civilized manner. For instances, in the by gone days, '*Hukahs*' were arranged for the guests as cigarette smoking was un-common. Separate arrangements were made for the different age groups, as it was not considered polite to smoke in the presence of elders. In one such party no such arrangement appears to have been made by the host and the folk singers have made the following remarks to show this deficiency: -

Ma:r pyach ho>kI tI qA:li:n barda:r,
Yim sarda:r[1] *bi:Thi' sabe' syo>d*

[1] There is pun on the word 'Sarda:r'. This word has two meanings. One is the 'head' of a regiment/group and the other is used for a 'Sikh', the follower of Sikh religion. They have religious binding not to smoke.

Meaning;

Hukahs with the flexible pipes and the carpets spread all over,

Yet these '*Sarda:rs*' have gone straight for feasting.

After the feasting is over, the guests occupy all the windows of the house where the marriage rituals are held leaving no space for the guests from the bride's side to watch what is happening outside. The folk singers cast a satire on such people in the following lines: -

Ka:kan hInz hA:ri: kanI du:ri:,
WA:riv bi:Thi: ta:kan[1] *pyeTh.*

Meaning:

Oh; fragile ear-ring-like merle of elderly people,
Your in-laws have seated themselves on the upper shelves of the windows.

The rich and the poor, the upper class and the lower class, the affluent and the common, all these divisions have always been present in human societies from times immemorial. In a marriage where the two families have not been of equal social/economic status, the folk song singing ladies have dealt with the aspect in the following manner: -

Kyah Karizi LA:nis tI la:ninis karmas,
SIh ru:di Sha:lan Pya:lI barnas.

Meaning:

Alas, the ways of fate and how these work, always differ,

Look, the lion is serving the jackals.

Here the word, 'lion' stands for an affluent person and the word, 'jackal' for an ordinary or a common man.

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[1] The root Sanskrit word 't:ak' meaning shelf or an opening.

b) Sa:l, - Feasting the guests.

The folk songs pertaining to the feasting are most colourful. In the past generally vegetarian feasting was held on the eve of marriages. The folk singers address the guests in the following manner : -

Kha:san kyut ro>n Ba:smati po>la:v,
Mytran kyut ro>n ChAtray Ha:r.
Asi rani to>hi kitsI navi tarka:re',
Mi:thi pa:lakh tai do>dI wa:ngan.
So>rgi: bu:zan istyamA:li:,
Asi rAni ko>ngI tarkA:ri:ye'.

Translation:

For the special guests we got prepared the special sweet *Basmati* rice and
For the friends we cooked the rice made from the '*ChatrI Ha;r*'[1] paddy
We got prepared new vegetables for you,
Like fenugreek, spinach and brinjal in curd.
The heavenly dishes were got arranged,
We got prepared the saffron flavoured vegetables.

It is a day of fasting for the groom till the marriage rituals come to an end. Once he shows his presence in the hall where feasting is held, the folk singers address him in the following manner knowing that he has not tasted anything due to his observing a fast till the marriage ritual is over, but still they ask him about the taste of different vegetables sarcastically: -

Sabi chuy bihith WAliye' Za:day[2]*,*
Qaliyas[3] *prItshitos sa:d cha: ja:n.*

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[1] It is one of the old varieties of paddy grown in the valley. Its rice is famous for flavour, taste and fragrance

[2] This is an Arabic word, meaning 'prince'. This shows that the couplet is a recent addition to the folk songs.

[3] Cheese, meat or vegetables prepared without the use of chilies. It looks yellowish due to the use of excessive turmeric while cooking.

MA:ji' lAjiyo ja:man cha:nyan,
Kho<bA:ni tse'ran kyuth chuy sa:d.
Bishmakh Ra:zIni' so>day bra:ryo,
Do>day nadre'n kyuth chuy sa:d.
MA:ji' pA:ri' lAjiyo cha:nyan achin,
Mye'Thyan nadIryan kyuth chuy sa:d.
Translation:
The prince is seated ahead of the feasting guests,
Ask him the taste of '*Qaliya*',
Let mother dote on your beautiful dress,
How tasty are the big apricots?
Oh simpleton of king *Bikshana Bhatta*,
How tasty are the lotus stalks cooked in yogurt?
Let your mother dote on your eyes,
How tasty are the sweet stalks of lotus.

c) *Samaj Sudhar* - Social Reform.

From the advent of the Muslim rule in Kashmir up to the first three decades of the twentieth century, the use of meat was common at the marriage feastings, etc., though it was confined to certain affluent families and some special guests [1] alone. During the late thirties of the twentieth centaury, a staunch revolutionary of '*Arya Smaj*', named *Champa Nath* is reported to have visited the valley of Kashmir for the propagation of his creed. He was a vegetarian and preached against meat eating. He was shocked to notice the use of meat by the Kashmiri Pandits in marriage parties. Being a reformer, he wanted to reform the Kashmiri Pandit society. He contacted some of the Pandits like, S/S *Har Gopal Kaul*, Mr. *Anand Kaul Munshi* and *Suraj Kak* who had respectable positions in the Pandit society of the valley in those days. In this way a movement was started on a large scale to stop the use of meat on such feastings. The preachers and reformers were

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[1] .Handoo, J.L., *Kashmiri Aur Hindi Ke Lok Geet.*, 1971, P. 201.

sent throughout the towns, villages and cities, big and small. A large number of people gave their support to this movement but the number of the people opposing it was not small. They opposed the vegetarian feasting tooth and nail. This fact is referred to in the folk songs sarcastically, a few lines wherefrom are reproduced below: -

Tsho>tI pyathI LisI [1] *kho>t DarmI Saba:ye'* [2],
Champa: NathIni' A;gnya:ye'.
Har Gopal Kauls vAki:l Sarda:ras,
Ra:khisas kati a:yi divIta: bo>d.
KaTh mo>kIlA:vin baji bala:ye'.
Champa: Na:thIni'; A:gnya:ye'.
A:nand MunIshi' tsa:man kAd kra:ye',
Sü:raj Kolan do>pus tsaye' raTh......

Translation:

From the heap of garbage the green wild amaranth,
(Li:sI) reached to the upper house of *Dharma*, [3]
with the permission of *Champa Nath.*
Har Gopal Kaul, the head of lawyers,
How that demon attained the godly wisdom?
He freed the poor sheep from the clutches of great hardships (death), (with the permission...)
Anand Munshy took out the fried cheese from the pan, and
Suraj Kaul asked him to hide it ......

In this way the ladies deputed for the '*VanIvon*' express their views regarding different varieties of vegetable and the other varieties of food got prepared by the host on the eve of the marriage of his daughter. It is because of this very fact that the hostess keeps a constant eye on these ladies when they come to the dining hall and she presents her best services to them.

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[1] It is a green wild vegetable.

[2] A nick name for the '*Sanatan Dharma Sabha*,' promoting the '*Arya Samaj*' movement.

[3] The word used for the *Sanatan Dharma* movement in Kashmir.

5. *Da:rI Pu:za*: - **Obeisance at the door.**

After being free from the '*Vyu:g*' the bride and the groom are led to the gate of the building where the arrangement for the marriage ritual has been made. On the main gate of the building the groom and the bride are asked to stand bare footed on the paddy grass, which is laid in front of the door for observing the '*Da:rI Pu:za:*' ritual. The father of the bride stands at the right side of the groom whereas the father of the groom takes his position to the left of the bride. The groom, the bride and her father pay their obeisance to the door as contained in the scriptures. Here the father of the groom and the host exchange a nutmeg along-with a hundred rupee note and a coin and the groom makes a pledge that he shall consider the door of the in-laws as sacred as the door of his parental house and shall defend it against all odds.

Our scriptures consider home as a 'workshop' for all the 'evil' and the 'good', '*Dharma*' and '*Adharma*'. Both these thoughts and notions breed and develop in a home and work for the development of it. Besides, there is a saying in Kashmiri which reads, '*Yus yasund gharI tsa:v, Su tasInzi Ma:gi za:v*', meaning ' One who enters into the house of a person, should consider that he is born of the 'Mother' of that house.' That is why the groom pays obeïsance to the bride's house before his entry into it. The door is also considered as the place to welcome the guests. Hence, the father of the bride welcomes the father of the groom at the gate first. In this way the groom becomes as good a member of their family as are the other members of that house. Now that the marriages are solemnized in hotels or guest-houses, the ritual of the '*Da:rI pu:za*' seems to have become irrelevant. As a major portion of our beliefs is symbolic, the Kashmiri Pandits have continued with this ritual in exile too in a symbolic form.

After exchanging the nutmeg *'Za:fal Badla:vun'* and completing the ritual, all enter into the house. The priest leads the marriage party to the *'Hawan Sha:la:'* for the marriage ritual. The following folk songs give a vivid picture of this function: -

VasIdi:v Ra:znis da:rI tI hangas,
A:li tI Ro>gas[1] *chi da:rI pu:za: .*
da:rI pu:za: kar ma:li VishvI Karma:ye',
da:rI pu:z ma:li kar Sa:ligra:mas.
Bhishmak Ra:zIni VishvI Karma:ye',
VasIdi:v Ra:znis Sa:ligra:mas.

Translation:
At the gate of king *Vasudeva* and at its arch,
The cardamom and the cloves are
paying their benedictions to the door.
Oh dear, you pay your respects *to Vishvakarma*[2],
You pay your respects to '*Saligram*'.[3]
You pay your benedictions to the court mason/ architect of *Bikshan Bhatta.*
To the little one of king *Vasudeva*, (Lord *Krishna*).

The obeisance at the gate ends and now the groom and the bride have to enter the room for the marriage ceremony. From the upper windows of the house, the friends of the bride make a shower of flowers on the head of the couple as they step in. The folk songs make a mention of the entry of the new couple into the house in the following words: -

He'rI chay so>ndar tI he'rI chay DA::ntIwi,

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[1]. Cardamom and cloves are similies used for the bride and the groom. The cardamom is less pungent but flavoured like the bride but contrary to this, the cloves are more pungent like the groom.

[2] '*Vishwakarma*', the Architect and Engineer of the gods.

[3] A small idol of '*Veshnu* is called *Sa:ligra:m*'. Here it is used for a handsome boy / groom. In the past it was also used as a proper name for the kids.

He'ri chu khasa:n Di:va: di Di:v[1]
So>ThkI he'ri kho>tkho paThkI dith tsha:ye',
Tsa:nDa:n I:shwar Ma:ya:ye'.[2]
DharmI he'ri kho>tkho marmI dith tsa:ye',
tsa:nDa:n Ko>lI Ko>ma:rye' a:kh.
Translation:
The staircase is beautiful, and the steps are ivory,
The lord of lords is ascending the steps.
You ascended the stair made of hard stone,
Hiding your face with the tail of your turban,
(It appears} God *Vishnu* is searching for the goddess *Lakshmi.*
You ascended the stairs of *Dharma,*
Under the secret cover of understanding,
You came here searching for the girl of the high caste and family.

6. *Kanya: Da:n (Kani Da:n):*
Giving away the girl.

After the reception of the *Barat, Kanya: Da:n* is the biggest ritual of this function. *Kanya: Da:n* is considered as one of the oldest marriage [3] rituals. The first mention of it is contained in the *Grahisutras*, wherein the right of the '*Kanya: Da:n*' has-been given to father alone [4]. Later on it has been extended to some of the close relatives in the '*Smriti*' period as is contained in the *Yagyavalkya Smriti.*[5] The need may have been felt in case the father of a girl died before her marriage. In order to solve such problems, the addition appears to have been

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[1] One of the names attributed to lord *Shiva.*

[2] The names attributed to Lord *Vishnu* and goddess *Lakshmi.*

[3] Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar Varanasi*, 1960, P.260-61.

[4] *'Pitri Pramatamahaya' Paraskar Grah is utra*, 1,6; 4, 1.

[5] '*Pita, Pitamaho, Bhratah sakulayo Janani tatha pradah, Poorvamshe Prakratishtah Parah Parah'* , *Yagyavalkya Smriti*, I. 6. 3.1.

made in the '*Smriti*' and the right of giving away the bride has been extended up to certain close relatives like the grand father, brother and even to the mother. This ceremony is completed in the valley according to the procedure described in the Scriptures. The importance of '*Kanya: da:n'* is considered an act of great virtue in the whole country. According to the scriptures it is one among the three all time great donations, like (i) *Bhu:mi da:n* -Land grant, (ii) Goa *da:n* - Donating a cow, and (iii) Kanya: *da:n.* There is no denying the fact that among all the castes and creeds of the sub-continent, it is considered the most auspicious one. Our holy scriptures, folk songs and folk stories have given due description to this ritual of social importance.

A man performing '*Kanya: da:n'* is considered to be the most fortunate one. Our folk songs consider it more pious than performing daily rituals and praying. One of such folk songs says that, 'who could be so fortunate as one who continues bathing even during the month of Ma:gha? {December – January, when the cold is at its peak in the valley) and also performs the *'Kanya:* da:n' of a girl. All these facts have been stated in the following folk song elaborately: -

Yus kari Ma:ghI shra:n nyath po:zi Sa:ligra:m,
Suyi kari satI vArishi' Kanya:da:n.
Yus Phal Gur [1] *Ga:v be'yi Gufurda:nas,*
Tami khotI phal chuy Kanya:da:nas..
Translation:
One who takes a bath [2] in the month of Ma:gha [3],

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[1] '*Gur*' means ' horse' and its donation appears to have been an act of feudal lords as there is a mention of donating a '*Vahana*' in the "*Dhan pratishTha:'* see '*Karma Kanday,* Pt. II by Keshav Bhat. P. 303. But offering of a horse in donation is uncommon among the general people now.

[2] Taking the bath in a running stream and that too during the month of Ma:gha, mid of winter season, in the valley is considered a supe. uman act.

[3]. It is the tenth month of the *Vikram* era.

One who performs the *Kanya: da:n* of a seven-year-old girl?
For him donating a horse or a cow is of a lesser virtue than giving away a girl in marriage.

At the scheduled time and after venerating the deities and burning of the sesame so as to drive out evil spirits or any witchcraft, which might have influenced the groom, the bride and her father, proceed towards '*Kanya: ·da:n*'. The mark of '*Swa:stika:*' is laid on a clean place and it is covered with paddy. A tumbler filled with water and a nutmeg, a '*Thali*', (out of the utensils already donated to the girl on the eve of '*Divgo<n*'), is placed on it. The '*Thali,*' also contains, a walnut, some curd, two straws of "*Darbha*" a *Yagnyopavita* consisting of three strings, a belt-like three-fold rope made of '*Darbha*:', called '*Darbhi Raz*' and two ribbons called the '*Manan ma:l*'[1] The hostess is asked to bring the '*Ma:ml na:bad*', a present for the maternal uncle of the groom, which comprises a metal pitcher containing sugar candy, some pieces of '*Barfi*:', and other presents in the form of a suit/cash. The bride is asked to circumambulate the said water tumbler put on the '*Swa:stika:*' and sit on the right thigh of her father who takes her right hand in his right one and the left in his left one. After sprinkling a little Holy Water on the hands of the groom and the bride, the groom sits on his feet and extends his hands for receiving the bride on three promises made by both. These are:

1. *Dharmay Cha* - For performing the acts of Dharma,
2. *Arthay Cha* - For material and economic prosperity, and
3. *Kamay Cha* - For the sake of sensual pleasures.

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[1] This is the second one. The first one was exchanged on the eve of '*Vyu:g*' ritual.

The priest completes the ceremony of '*Kanya: da:n*' while pointing/touching the persons involved, (the groom as the receiver, the father as the donor and the bride as the donated one), three times with the tip of the two straws of '*Dharba:*' which had been kept in the '*Thali*' put on the tumbler over the '*Swa:stika:*'.

After the ceremony of '*Kanya: Da:n*', the bride and the groom are offered a mirror so as to see the reflection of one another in it, known as '*A:nI wuchun*'. The reasons for such an act seems to be: -

a). To make both of them familiar with one another's appearances before their marriage is finalized. In the absence of the modern facilities and freedom of movement, a girl till recently was not allowed to see the boy who was going to become her life partner. It was the first chance for both of them to see each other.

b) The more accepted version is that while seeing the face of each other in the mirror, the priest who performs their marriage rituals, recites from the scriptures which is a kind of prayer, saying 'let the thoughts, speech, whims and wishes of both of you be the same as is their replicas in the mirror'.

7. Yoni Porud - Casting of the holy thread to the groom by the father-in-law.

At the time of the Holy Thread Ceremony, the grand/father casts a thread of three strings on their son so as to bring him into the fold of the Brahamnical order. According to the scriptures the girls too wore the thread during the early *Vedic* period just like the boys did. The Holy Thread is commonly called '*Maha Gayatri*' and has been revered by one and all since times immemorial, the girls had to part with it during their periods. It was

probably during the *Samhita* period that the right to the holy thread was extorted from the women folk and men only were allowed to share this responsibility. In this way the father of the girl gives the three additional strings to the groom and thus makes his *Yognyopavita* of six strings on the eve of the marriage.

At the time of wearing of the Holy Thread, the groom receives the benedictions from the parents of the bride. The mother of the bride once more ties the *'Manan Ma:l'* to the groom and the bride. Then they are asked to eat a piece of '*Barfi*' or sugar candy three times. The remaining sugar candy and other presents, called '*Ma:mI Na:bad*' are offered by the groom to his maternal uncle as a present from his in laws.

In the meantime the father of the bride or the person at the helm of affairs makes arrangement for sending all the dishes got cooked for the feast in the ceremonial kitchen including the rice of different tastes and varieties to the groom's house. This function is called, '*BatI syun sozun*'. Every care is taken so that all the eatibles reach safely to the destination in a presentable manner. In addition to this, at least a fifty Kg. bagful of rice or more and ten Kg. of yogurt is sent to the groom's house in the evening along with other presents, which is in addition to the cooked eatables as mentioned above.

8. GangI Vye's -
Personification of Ganga in the form of a Friend.

It is a combination of two words, '*Ganga*' and '*Vye's*'. Besides, other shades of meaning, '*Ganga*' also means '*mother's milk*'. In case two babies breast feed from a single mother, they are called '*do>dI BA:y/Be'ni*'. In reality there might not be any relationship between the families of the two children but the relation of having

taken milk from the same women make them more than blood relations. The bounds of breast-feeding from a single mother are so strong that the marriage between such children is strictly prohibited. Two girls with such a back ground become fast friends and are called '*GangI VyesI*'. Now taking the other shade into consideration, the '*Ganga*' is he holiest of all the rivers of India. A small girl from the family of the bride is invited and placing the water tumbler in her hand (kept previously on the '*Swa:stika*'), the priest sprinkles water over the bride and the groom while reciting from the Holy Scriptures. The small girl is the witness to the fact that the bride is as pious as the water of the *Ganga* in the hands of the little girl. During this ritual a red shawl is spread over the couple and the decorated umbrella is kept open over their heads. The Scriptures call this ritual as '*Abhisheka*', meaning sprinkling or dripping of water over an idol and here it purifies the couple by sprinkling the Holy Water while reciting from the scriptures. Needless to say that the couple is considered as pious as the deities like, '*Shiva*' and '*Shakhti*' or '*Lakshmi*' and '*Narayana*'. The father of the bride rewards the girl functioning as 'GangI Vye's', handsomely, after completing the ritual.

9. *AthI Wa:s* - Holding of Hands.

A clean carpet is laid on the place where the priest has laid the '*Swa:stika:*' and covered it with paddy prior to the '*Kanya Dan*' ritual. The groom and the bride are asked to come to this place leaving the holy fire to their right side. Here the groom stands facing the holy fire i.e. facing westwards while the bride stands before him facing east. The groom is further asked to take the right hand of the bride in his right one and the left hand in the left one. Both of them make four mutual agreements at this point and they are asked to sit on the carpet. A shawl is spread

over their hands. It is generally believed that their married life is going to be as smooth and close as tightly they hold the hands of one another at this hour. At this time complete austerity is maintained by the couple for they have completed most of their marriage rituals and hence they enter into the realm of giving assurances for leading a purposeful married life which is the ultimate goal of this *Sanskar*. But, unfortunately, the modern generation has generally discarded almost all the ancient values, either due to their ignorance or due to the lack of understanding of the Sanskrit language in which all our rituals are recorded. The generation gap could also be a reason, with the result that the ritual, which contains life-long well. wishes for the newly married couple, has become a fun for the so-called modern boys/girls. It has been observed that the two make an attempt at this thoughtful moment to take off either a ring or a wristwatch from one another's wrists. This sort of action at such a serious moment appears to be highly objectionable and against the accepted practices. However, it deserves to be mentioned here that this bad practice of taking out each other's ring, etc., has been discarded to a great extent due to the recent educational, economic and social changes in our society.

During all this time the father of the bride completes the ritualistic portion of making offerings of different ingredients to the Holy Fire while recitations from the scriptures continue. The priest makes the vermilion mark on the fore-head and binds the sacred wrist-thread, *'NA:rivan'* to some of the guests who are groom's close relatives accompanying the '*Barat*' and who want to participate in the ritual and earn the blessings of the couple considered to be as *Shiva* and *Shakhti* at this time of the ceremony. The folk songs of this hour are varied but all lay stress on holding the hands tightly. A few examples are quoted below: -

AthIwa:s kara:n yuthnI athI Daliye',
KathI kar HA:riye' Totas sA:ti'.

AthIwa:s kara:n athI raTi: chi:ray,
KathI kari si:ray bA:jis sA:ti'.
Cha:ni kori ditsnay shayitrIh nAhIje',
Pheri Ku:ri' va:je' athIva:s kArith.
Yitsh ku:ri rAchinakh RIkhmani ma:je',
Tyuth nay hyaki: nI kanh ti rAchith.
Khye'ni ditinay khanDI khA:li' chyeni do>dI pa:je',
Pheri Ku:ri' va:je', ...

Translation:

Don't let loosen your grip while holding each other's hands.
Oh starling! Have a sweet conversation with the parrot, the lovebird.
While performing the handshake hold your hands tightly.
Start a conversation with the one who is to share all the secrets with you.
Your daughter has been bestowed with thirty-six senses.
Oh, dear daughter you turn after completing the handshake.
Oh daughter; the manner in which you have been looked after by mother *Roukhmani*.
No body would have taken as much pains to bring- you up.
She gave kernels and sugar candy to you to eat and plenty of milk to drink.
Oh; dear daughter you turn after ....

10. La:yi Bo<y - The Spotless Brother.

Derived from the Sanskrit word, '*Lajah*', '*La:yi*' possess a special significance in our all religious rituals. Besides, being in the purest form, the white colour is considered as a sign of good will and prosperity. The paddy is first soaked in water for a day or so. The wetness is the sign of love and affection. Then it is put in red-hot sand, the sign of fire, and hence a position leading the

seeker to the higher realms and final salvation. The colour of the soaked paddy becomes white as the rice bursts out of it and its husk is burnt; thus the white colour, the sign of purity and holiness, emerges. As in the path of salvation, a small negligence can drift a seeker away from the main path, in the same manner a simple mistake can change the colour of the puffed rice which can get a colour other than the white one on being heated and once the colour changes either due to excess or insufficient heat, the puffed rice becomes unfit for use and it is thrown away. In the same way the obedience and good manners are the best ornaments of a child. During the marriage ceremony, the younger brother or a close relative of the bride, coming under the category of brothers from the parental side, is brought to the *'Hawan Shala'*. After applying the vermilion mark on his fore-head and tying the wrist knot of *'NA:rivan'*, a packet of puffed rice is given in his hands after proper benedictions. The groom and the bride are asked to make a round of the Holy Fire from the left side (because till then they are seated to the east of it) with the groom taking the lead till they reach their actual sitting place in front of the fire where they were previously seated. Here the groom and the bride are asked to keep their right toe on a stone pestle, *'Ka:jwaTh,'* already placed there and they confirm the first oath of standing by the side of one another in all situations of life. After receiving their confirmation, the priest takes a handful of puffed rice from the packet and throws it into the fire while chanting the hymns from the scriptures along with the name and *'Gotra'* of the groom. Then they are asked again to circumambulate the Holy Fire but this time from the right side and again reach their seats. They are asked to take the second vow of fulfilling sensual desires of each other, which both of them speak out and agree to it. Again the puffed rice is put to the flames and the couple start for the third round. Coming back to their original seats, they again put their right toes on the pestle

and make the third promise of maintaining complete harmony in their family life. After confirming it the rest of the puffed rice is offered to the fire.

The brother, besides being a guardian of the sister, is a witness to her purity and chastity. In the social set up too the brother has always remained as a guard to the whims and wishes, likes and dislikes of his sister. He has always been a protector of her vows and wishes and this very fact is repeated at this ritual of the marriage. After completing the ritual, the father of the groom has to give a good reward to the 'brother' for his gracious presence at the function.

11. SaftI PAdi: - The Seven Steps/ Vows.

According to the Indian way of marriage, after completing the '*Kanya Da n'* ceremony, the bride and the groom's outer garments are knotted together and they are asked to circumambulate the Holy Fire seven times and thus leaving her original '*Kula*' *or* '*Gotra*', the bride she enters into the *Gotra*/family of the groom after making seven vows. In Kashmir this function is performed in a different manner. Here the bride is asked to walk over seven coins and thus leave her parental '*Kula*', or her family caste and enter and adopt the '*Kula/Gotra*' of her husband's family[1]. All these coins are arranged by the father of the groom to the northwest of the Holy Fire in such a way that the bride can take her steps on them very easily. Each coin is kept on a straw of '*Darbha*:' and covered with a currency note. The seven steps towards the north are mentioned in the '*Grahisutras*' [2] as making seven promises. It is also stated that the bride would walk

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[1] a). Yadav, Dr. Shankar Lal, , *Haryana Pradesh Ka Loka Sahitya*, Mitra Prakashan Allahabad, 1960, P. 163. and b) *Khadi Boli Ka Loka Sahitya*, Indian Academy , Allahabad, 1965 P. 53.

[2] Paraskar Grahis utra, I, 2, 1.

seven steps and each step contains a promise, which is a binding on both the parties. These are: -

1 For the sensual enjoyment, you be '*E'kI PAdi:*', like a one legged person, i.e. slow but cautious.
2. In the field of wisdom and thought, you behave like '*Dwe PAdi:*', like a human being
3. For increasing the number of family members, you be like a '*Tri PAdi:*'[1] cunning and heeding.
4. For comfort, you be '*Chatush PAdi:*', hard-working like a beast.
5. For the house-hold animals, you behave like '*Pancha PAdi:*' i.e. in complete uniformity like the, 'Pancha Maha Butas'[2]
6. For the house-hold chores, you be '*ShaT PAdi:*', i.e. to work with all the six parts of the body [3].
7. For a companion like me (groom) you behave as '*Safta Padi:*' [4] i.e. in perfect harmony like the seven tones of music.

In this way the bride pays her benedictions to her father-in-law and all those present there bless the

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1 The Kashmiri word, '*Tri pAti*', meaning a cunning person appears to have been derived from this word. The root Sanskrit word,' *Stri Pada*', meaning 'a cunning person'. In the past, as else where, the court ladies/dancers have played a great part in making the future kings of Kashmir. The lady would go in a dancing posture and point out to the Emperor, the person to be the *future king of the land. Hence, known as 'Stri Pada:h.'. A person who* cheats at the game of three cards of the card game 'Flash', is also called a 'Tri PAti'.

2 The '*Pancha Maha Bhuts.*' In a body are, 1. Water. 2. Fire, 3. Earth, 4. Ether and 5 'Man'. These form the complete circle of this universe. Here it is used as the re-cycling process of food, i.e., the left over of food crops is the food for the animal and what ever the animal give in return is the food for the soil and for the man. Thus completing the circle of existence.

3 The six parts of body known as '*ShaDanga:s*' are; 1-2, Two Arms. 3- 4 Two legs, 5, Head and 6. Man.

4. The seven notes of music, which give the final shape to a musical formation.

couple. The bride again is lead to sit in front of the Holy Fire where she was seated previously to the left side of the groom. While extending her hands upwards with open palms, '*Vo>pastha:n*' posture, the *Kula Guru* blesses the bride, saying that by showing the obedience as contained above you shall be the queen of 'your new mother, father and the sister/s-in-law [1]. Stress has been laid on taking these seven steps in the *Yagyavalkya* and the *Manu Smritis* also. These contain:-

'Nodkeyna na va vachah Kanyayah patiruchyatay,
Panigrihana Sanskarat patitwom saftamay paday. [2]'

Translation:

Neither drinks, nor feasting, nor by taking of oaths, not even by completion of the '*Kanya: da:n Sanskar*', can justify a person to be called the husband of a girl. He achieves this position only after the girl completes the seven steps.

During the medieval period, this ritual had currency in the Indian society and marriage was considered incomplete without this ritual. [3] This ritual is still having a dominant place among all the rituals of the marriage ceremonies of Kashmir. This forms one of the most important rituals of marriage according to the *Grahisutras* and the people of Kashmir consider the marriage incomplete with out this ritual. The posture called, '*Vo>pasthan*' is a direct derivation from the root Sanskrit word, '*Upasthan*' meaning 'coming close to.' Here she pays her reverence to her new father by touching his feet in a traditional Indian way of showing reverence to elders. The father-in-law also blesses her affectionately.

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[1] Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskara*, Aushadyalaya Press, Varanasi, P. 278, b). Bhatt, Pandit Kesho, *Mekhala Pustak, Vivah Vidi*, 1925, P. 42.

2. Ibid, P. 41

In a Kashmiri folk song this ritual has been given due description. It reads : -

MathIra: Nagri: hund Mo>rli:dar[1] *chuy,*
Sheri chis mukaT tay alanka:r
Nishi chas RIkhman tAmi sund var chuy,
Har chuy saha:yat kar pratikhyan.
KA:shi: nAgri: hund Ve'shambar chuy ,
JaTi chas Ganga tI haTi Va:sukh [2]
Nishi chas Pa:rwati tAmi sund var chuy, (Har.....)
Zanak Ra:zun [3] *so>yamvar chuy,*
Ram Ji danurdanD [4] *tulnay a:v,*
Ayodhya Nagri hund Sha:mI So>ndar chuy, ...

Translation :-

He is the Flutist from the city of *Mathura* (Lord *Krishna*).
The pearls and the ornaments are decorated on his forehead.
Roukhmani is sitting near him, as she is his beloved,
Lord *Shiva* is your helper you circumambulate.
He is the *Vishembar*[5] of the city of *Kashi*
He has Ganges in his matted hair and '*Vasuki*' round his neck.
Parwati is near him as he is her Lord, Lord *Shiva*...,
It is the 'marriage by choice' held by King *Janak*,
Ram has come to lift the bow,
He is the Black Beauty from the city of Ayodhya,
Lord Shiva ....

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1 Lord *Kri shna* is known by this name also.

2 The name of the cobra put around the neck by Lord *Shiva*.

3 The famous King *Janak*, father of '*Sita*' of the great Epic, *Ramayana*.

4 The lifting of the legendry bow of Lord *Shiva* was the per-condition for marrying Sita

5 The names attributed to Lord *Shiva*

12. Abi:d - Receiving Alms.

After completing the ritual of '*SaftI PAdi* 'and paying respects to her father-in-law, the bride comes to her seat before the Holy Fire and in this way the marriage as a *Sanskar* comes to an end. Now the couple has to offer '*Abi:d'* to their *Kula Guru* for completing this *Sanskar.* Thus comes the stage of asking for '*Biksha:*' from the bride [1]. Here a '*Thali:*' with a walnut, a straw of *Darbha* and a little of curd is handed over to the bride. The groom, her father-in-law, her mother and father, each present at the moment, offer an amount of at least rupees one hundred each as *'Abi:d'*, according to their economic status, to the bride just as is presented to a boy on the day of the '*Yagnyopavita.*' The difference is that: -

1. The girl gets the '*Abi:d*' while sitting at her place in front of the ritual fire and she has not to ask for the same like the boy;
2. No stick of a *Plash* or mulberry tree as *'DanDam'* is given in her hand as she at the moment is considered as '*Shakhti:*' nor has she to wear any ceremonial dress on the occasion as is prescribed in the scriptures for the males, and.
3. The scriptures have allowed only the above said persons for this pious act and giving *Abi:d* at this ritual, is not open to the general public.

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[1] The three strings of the *Ya gnyopavita which* previously were worn by the bride according to the Dharam Shastra, are offered to her husband by her father. Hence she is entitled to ask for the *'Abi:d.'*. This act of '*Abi:d'* further indicates that the girls were entitled to Yagnyopavita in the past.

13. Pa:ran Du:ni - Offerings of Walnuts.

After the '*Abi:d*' ceremony, the groom gives ten walnuts and a coin to the bride who, taking all of them in the loose end of her *Sari* , hands them over to her father-in-law. He receives them in his handkerchief. Here again the bride pays reverence to her father-in-law in the traditional Indian way and the father-in-law again blesses her. This ceremony is called, '*Pa:ran Du:ni*'. After completing the ritual of '*Pra:ya:chit*' the groom and the bride is offered yoghrut out of the offering made to the holy fire. The *Kula Guru* bestows both of them with the blessings of good health and prosperity. The word '*Pa:ran*' appears a derivation from the word '*Parayana*' meaning finishing, completion or breaking of fast. As the couple is asked to take their food in a common plate called '*Dayi BatI*' immediately after this ritual and the bride has to give a present to her father-in-law as a token of completing the ritual successfully, hence '*Pa:ran Du:ni.*' Our scholars and thinkers have given a high place to the walnuts at such functions of religiosity and it is probably due to these very facts that walnuts are closely connected with all our *Sanakars* like the coconuts which have a similar importance in all such rituals performed in the rest of the sub-continent. The ten walnuts presented by the bride to her Father-in-law are preserved for some time and afterwards buried in the soil of an orchard, back yard or at a sacred place of pilgrimage. The coin is preserved as a symbol of bringing good fortune to the family of the new wed.

14. Dayi BatI - Sharing of the 'Naived'.

This function is connected with the general kitchen. The cook waits for this hour very eagerly. All the guests of both the sides have already finished their

lunch/dinner. The cook is now called in and a '*Tha:li:*' from the utensils presented to the girl, called '*Satra:th*', is handed over to him to bring all the dishes prepared for the guests, for the new couple. The place before the groom and the bride is cleaned with water and pasted with clay. The cook along with a cup of curd presents the '*Thali*' to them and it contains all the dishes, which were preparted for the lunch/ dinner of the *Barat*. The cook washes their hands. After making a few offerings to the Holy Fire as contained in the scriptures, the bride and the groom keep a small portion of food outside their plate called '*Hu:ni Mye't*' and thus they start eating from the same plate. They are asked to take seven morsels and then offer three morsels to one another. This time is more hectic for the photographers and the video men. After finishing their ceremonial lunch, the cook washes their hands and he brings back the '*Tha:li:*' after cleaning it properly. Here he receives a good gratification from the father of the groom as a good omen.

This ritual is very old and there is a vivid description of this function in the '*Paraskara Grahi-sutra*'.[1] According to the Hindu way of life this is the first and the last chance for a couple to dine from the same '*Tha:li:*'. Scientifically, combined dining from the same plate is not considered hygienic and our scriptures have strictly prohibited doing so. According to the scriptures dining from the same plate tells upon the longevity of the groom. The bride, if she wishes so, may take the leftovers of her husband, but this is not a binding, though the scriptures describe it as a boon for the bride. The aim of allowing the two to dine from a single plate at this ritual is allowed just to make them understand the inner feelings, likes and dislikes of one

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1 Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Aushyadhyalaya Press Varanasi, 1960, P. 285

another. [1] The folk song describes it in the following words : -

Kori ko>mA:ri: ma:mI Ju: Dakhi chuy,
Nakhi chuy Tso>tur Bo>z Na:ra:yan.
BonI kani vAnitos lo>ktis bA:yis,
Dayi BatI kha:rihay Mahara:zas.
Gori hIndi onmay do>dI tsaDIvo<ruy
So<ruy da:mI da:mI chatA:mo.

Translation:

Oh dear daughter; the maternal uncle is by your side,
And you are near the *Narayana*, having four-arms
Let her younger brother, who is below, be asked
To bring the *'Dayi BatI'* for the groom.
I bought a small pitcher of curd from the house of the milkman.
Please take all of it slowly in single mouthfuls.

The friends of the groom and the bride come forward and pass remarks to tease both of them. Addressing the bride, the friends of the groom say, " His mouth is watering, and you have taken the leftovers of this dirty fellow.' The friends of the bride address her in the following words, "Her nose is always running. Have you taken the leftovers of such a mad girl?" The ritual ends in the midst of all this humour and satire.

15. Po<shi Pu:za:

Showering flowers on the couple

The scriptures and the holy books, the *Grahi-sutras*, all contain couplets and verses which, besides containing the poetic imagination, are full of good wishes and blessings for the betterment and well being of the newly wed couple. Both are asked to honour the whims

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[1] Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Aushyadhyalaya Press Varanasi, 1960, P 285

and wishes of one another. The comparison of the couple is made with great lovers, deities and various incarnations of gods as contained in Indian mythology and all pray for the betterment and the welfare of the couple. This practice is not prevalent in Kashmir alone but in the whole of the sub-continent. In Kashmir the couple is not adored just verbally but they are revered and worshipped in the form of *Shiva-Shakhti*, or *Lakshmi-Narayana*. All the people of he bride's house take part in this hour of devotion Not only the young, but the elders, even the parents and the grand parents also pay their obeisance by showering flowers on the new couple. After completing the ceremonies involved in the wedding, it is considered as the last rite of the function. The members of the family, the relatives and neighbours also take part in this highly devotional act of adoring the couple with flowers, commonly known as ' *Po<shi Pu:za* '.

First of all the groom and the bride adore each other by showering flowers on each other's heads three times alternately. The bride takes the lead by standing up with a handful of flowers and showers it on the head of her groom while the *Kula Guru* chants hymns from the scriptures. Then the bride sits and the groom gets up and repeats it in the same way. In this way the process is repeated three times involving three promises. Then the groom and the bride are asked to sit cross-legged. A red shawl is thrown over them and the function of the 'showering flowers' by all those present starts. The priests start reading from the Holy Scriptures in a loud and melodious voice. All the members of the family, old and young, stand around and adore the newly wed couple by showering flowers. Every person is in a serious mood paying his/her obeisance to the couple regarded as *Shiva* and *Shakhti* at this special ritual. In the other corner of the hall the folk singers are busy paying their reverence in the following words: -

Mo>khtI kani ta:rakh chis ta:pI da:nas[1],
Cham I:sha:nas poshi pu:za:.
RathI ba:nI kani chis sA:ri: divta:,
Sa:yiba:n bano>vmut chukh asma:nas, (Cham..)
Dye'kas pyaTh tsAndram prazla:n la:las,
Chis pa:nI Lu:kIpa:l[2] *kara:n gAji' ga:h,*
Brahma tI Veshin chis hyath zA:npa:nas,
Cham I:shanas ……
DharmI Ra:zI vo>thmut chus darIm da:nas,
Ganga: sa:gar hyath chas Gang
Lakhmi: mi:Thi chas diwa:n da:ma:nas,
Cham I:shanas . ……..
Zangi tha:l anInas chas pa:nI Sandhya[3],
Vyu:g le'kha:n chas KarmI Li:kha[4]
VudI za:la:n chas dI::pI da:nas,
Cham I:shanas ………
Vasuk[5] *tI Varun*[6] *kharIch barda:r chis,*
Soruy swargI da:r sI:ti' sI:ti' chus.
RathI chus gonDmut manz mA:da:nas,
Cham I:sha:nas poshi pu:za:.

Translation :

There are stars instead of pearls on his forehead,
Lord *Shiva* is being showered with flowers.
All gods are his charioteers,
The whole sky is transformed into a canopy, Lord...

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1 "*Ta:ph'*, means 'sunshine'. It is a skylight where from the sunlight enters into the room or basement.

2 The name of a deity who protects a region of the universe.

3 The goddess of twilight.

4 The goddess of fate who decides the fate of every creature.

5 The second one out of the eight prominent *Nagas.* Lord *Shiva* wears it round his neck.

6 The rain-god, *Varuna* and god of the oceans, *Va:suki*: are considered as the guardians of *Kube' r*, the keeper of the treasures of gods.

On his forehead, the crescent is shining,
Deities of different regions are whisking him personally.
Brahma and *Veshnu* are the carriers of his palanquin, Lord *Shiva* ....
The Lord of *Dharma* has himself bestowed him with *Dharma* (Charity),
And the goddess *Ganga* is present with a spouted jug.
The goddess of wealth is kissing the boarders of his garments, Lord *Shiva* ......
The goddess of twilight (*Sandhya*:) has herself come with a '*Tha:l*' of '*Zang*'
The goddess of fate has laid the '*Vyu:g*' personally,
They are burning Niger in the ceremonial lamp, Lord *Shiva* ....
Va:suki: Na:g and the god of oceans, '*Varun*' (the ministers of *Kubera*, the lord of wealth) are his accountants,
All the heavens are accompanying him,
The chariot has been stopped in the mid-field, Lord *Shiva* is being ......

After concluding the benedictions with showering of flowers, the heaps of flowers thus accumulated on the heads of the groom and the bride, are exchanged on one another's heads. All bend low so as to show their reverence for the newly wed considering them to be *Shiva* and *Parwati*. After spraying the water from the '*Kalsh*' and giving a walnut as '*Naived*' to each present, the rituals connected with the main functions of the marriage, come to an end.

Chapter Six

Post –marriage functions /Ceremonies

Post-marriage functions can be classified under the following categories: -

a) Functions held on the date of the marriage,

b) Functions held on subsequent days,

c) Functions connected with the festivals of the year of marriage, and

d) Other miscellaneous functions of general nature.

a) Functions held on the day of the marriage

These can be discussed under the following heads:-

1. *Ro>khsat* - Departure,
2. *KAdlI Ta:r* - Crossing of the bridge by the newly wed for the first time after marriage.
3. *SatIra:th* - Welcome to the new couple on their evening arrival at the bride's house.
4. *ZA:m Bra:nd* - Gratifications to the groom's sister on the bride's first entrance into the groom's house..
5. *MAti' Mo>har*- presents for the mother-in-law. at the time of first entrance of the bride into the new house.
6. *KuTh Dyun* - Allotment of a separate room.

b) Post-marriage functions of the subsequent days :-

These mainly comprise:-

1. *Pra:ya:chit* - Expiation at the bride's house.
2. Ko>*shal Hom* - Thanks giving (at the groom's house).
3. *TrankI ha:vun* - Displaying the dowry.
4. *Sha:ndI KAr* - Presents for the Father-in-law's sister, '*Po>f*'.
5. *RoTh Khabar* - Welfare Information.
6. *PhirI sa:l* - First invitation to the son-in-law.

7. *PhirI laTh* - Second invitation to the son-in-law.
8. *HA:zi:ri:* - Visit of the close relatives of the bride.
9. *Cha:y chavIni'*- Serving of tea by the bride for the first time.
10. *GarI Atsun* - First formal invitation to the two families for entrance in one another's house.

c) The festivals of the First year of marriage.

The festivals of considerable importance of the year for the newly wed couple comprise-

1. *Vo>har VA:di* - Birthdays.
2. *Ne'trI Vo>har Vo<d* - Marriage anniversary.
3. *Shra:vnI Punim* - *Raksha Bhandhan.*
4. *ZarmI Satam* - *Janam Ashtami.*
5. *Shishur la:gun* - Festival on the First Winter.
6. *He'rath* - *Shiva Ratri.*
7. *Navre'h* - New Year's Day.
8. *ZangI Tray* - Third day of the New Year.

d) Other functions of general nature:

1. *NavI Sheen* - The first snowfall.
2. *Do>d Dyun* - First pregnancy.

a) Functions held on the day of the marriage.

1. *Ro>khsat* - Departure

After the completion of the '*Po<shi Pu:za:*' ritual, the groom and the bride take a little rest. The majority of the guests leave immediately after lunch. Only a few of the closest relatives of the groom stay behind till evening to accompany him back to his parental house. Every body is exhausted after the day's

hectic schedule. The couple is again asked to take the dinner at an odd hour. But it is considered as a good omen to take a few morsels before leaving for their home. They do so just to accomplish the custom and they make preparations for their return to the groom's parental home. It may be pointed out that they have to come back again to this house the same evening for '*Satra:th.*'- 'a return evening journey' as it is called in the common Kashmiri language.

The time of leaving for the groom's house forever has finally arrived for the bride. This is really a sad parting scene, which makes wet the eyes of even an onlooker. The groom waits in the car while the bride takes leave from her near and dear ones, with wet eyes. She tightly embraces her aunts and brothers/sisters. She holds her parents so fast that at times others have to intervene to separate them. The weeping and wailing at this hour of joy is the actual essence of human life. What we sea, is not a reality and what is presumed, is the reality. The philosophers have named it as the web of '*Ma:ya:*', 'Illusion', which repeats here itself on this particular occasion. Every thing reaches its determined goal giving in return wet eyes. Any way, in the midst all these mixed feelings they leave for their home.

The feelings of separation have been given due expression by the Indian scholars. Whether it is the moment of the departure of '*Shakuntala*' from the *Ashrama* of *Kanava Rishi,* or the lamentation of the king *Dasharatha* at the time of departure of Lord Rama for fourteen year's exile, or bewildered '*Gopis*' of '*Gokula*' when they were left deploring by Lord *Krishna* on his departure for *Mathura* or the desperate and veiling condition of '*Urmila*' when she was left behind by *Lakshmana* who accompanied Rama to the forests.

The belongings of the bride or the items of dowry either accompany them or stand already transferred to the groom's house during the day or on

some earlier occasion. At this time the bride is given a pot of curd called '*Do>dI Dul'* and some cash called, '*AtI-Gath'*[1] and a sack full of rice.

The scene on the departure of the bride from her parental house has been described adequately by our folk poets and these songs contain the sobs of the parents and the relatives, the good wishes of all those present and the eagerness of the groom's relatives for the early departure. A few lines are quoted here.

The bride is advised: -

Ma:linichi kunzI kar ma:ji hawa:lai,
Ne'ri' ku:ri' wA:riwiki' sA:wA:lay.
Vunyukta:m A:s ham hyari bo>nI rA:chi:,
Ma:ji hinz TA:chi: garI gatshIkhay?
HA:r cham mA:lis ro>khsat he'vA:ni:,
Ashi kani khu:n ha:rA:ni:ye'.
ZA:npa:n kAha:ro chuvI swa:lIy,
Du:li' pakInA:viton varI va:rai.
Yuth na sA: zA:niv du:li' chavI tsArIye',
Ath andar go>la:b thArIye' chav.
A:nI zA:npa:nas dAchini' kini' dA:r chay,
Ath andar hA:r chay va:rI wuchizye'n.
Do<lay chanay so>nIsund kubI chuy,
tse' kusuy gam chuy bab chuy sA:ti'.[2]

Translation:

You hand-over the keys of your parental house to your mother,

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[1] '*AtI Gath'* means coming and going. Hence, these are the expenses for to and fro transport. Actually the bride has to pay this money to her mother-in-law. On the first arrival of the bride at the in-laws house, her mother-in-law also pays '*AtI Gath'* to the bride but only once, which the parents of the bride have to return after doubling it. From thence onwards, the bride is paid '*AtI Gath'* whenever she visits her parental house. She also gets some bakery breads an '*AtIho>r'* and a packet of salt on some special occasions.

[2] The Urdu/Persian words like, *Ro>khsat, Ka ha:r and Sawa:l'* used in the folk song depict some recent additions made in it.

Oh dear daughter, you now leave for joining your in-laws.
You acted as a guard to my whole house till now,
Oh you beloved of your mother, are you proceeding towards your home?
The starling is taking leave from her father, and weeping so profusely.
Oh palanquin bearers, for God's sake, you should carry the palanquin very slowly.
Don't think that the palanquin is empty; there is a rose plant in it.
The palanquin, decorated with mirrors, has a window on its right side,
The starling is in it you check it thoroughly.
Your palanquin has its dome made of pure gold,
Why are you worried? your sire is with you.

The groom is approached by the ladies folk with an appeal in the following words: -

SonI sInzi' gangIje' ro>pI sInz hi: chay,
Dayi' sInz drIy chay wa:rI rAchizyan.
PA:mpIri Ko>ng mond that no tAchize',
Ko:r no rAchize' lukI hund ma:l.
Sa:ni' kani' Sha:rika: tuhIndi kani Vetasta:[1]*,*
Yihay gAr tsyatIsa: thA:vi:ze'.
ChandIkuy hA:vi'zes dilIkuy bA:vi'zes,
Kasam chuy mol mA:ji mAshirA:vi'zes.

Translation:

The small golden urn has a silver spout,
For God's sake you should look after her carefully.
It is a Saffron bulb from *Pampore* and it should not be scraped repeatedly,
One should not bring up a girl, for she is the treasure given to others.

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1. '*Vitasta*', the river *Jehlim* has been personified and brought at par with goddess *Sharika* whose abode is on the hillock of Hari Parbath, near Srinagar city.

Goddess *Sharika* is our witness and *Vitasta* Yours,
You should always remember this moment.
You should show her the belongings of your pockets and always apprise her of your inner thoughts,
Take an oath that you will love her so much that she forgets her parents.

2. *KAdlI Ta:r* - crossing the bridge for the first time after marriage.

On leaving the venue of the marriage function, the groom and the bride proceed to the groom's house in a car. On their way while reaching the middle of a bridge, the car stops. The driver makes hundred and one excuses and the car remains motionless. It is only after the groom gives the driver a good gratification that the car starts moving ahead. This pleasure payment to the driver, is known as, '*KadlI Ta:r*'.

3. *SatIra:th*: Welcome to the new couple on their first arrival at the bride's house.

After completing the marriage rituals, the groom leaves for his parental house along with the bride after completing the ceremonial dinner at the bride's house. All the members of his family, the relatives and the neighbours, are waiting at the groom's house eagerly to welcome the newly wed. The loud singing, dancing and playing on the musical instruments at the groom's house can be heard from a considerable distance. A big '*Vyu:g*' is laid in the front courtyard with two plates of rice, a little '*VAr*' and a coin on each of them. They stand on the '*Vyu:g*' and the mother or the grand mother of the groom performs the '*a:lath*' ceremony. This late hour ceremony is witnessed by a large number of neighbours who have been waiting there till the arrival of the bride. Besides, the guests, who stayed back in the house for the past couple

of days, witness this occasion. In this way the new couple is led to the main gate of the house in a very joyous and jubilant mood.

4. ZA:m Bra:nd -
Gratifications to the groom's sister on the first entrance of the bride into the house.

The groom and the bride,.after the usual '*Vyu:g*' function, come to the main gate of the house and here they are stopped by the sister of the groom who, at heart, is more joyous and cheerful than all others on the arrival of the bride as her new companion. Firstly her joy is due the fact that her brother has been married and secondly, she gets a sweet sister-in-law as one of her best friends in her family. The bride too has a soft corner for her and, as such, while bringing presents for the new parents and for all their family members, her parents give a golden ornament or some other costly present, which she offers to her sister-in-law on this special occasion. It is named as, '*ZA:m Bra:nd*'. It is in addition to the normal gifts, which she brings from her parents for the whole family including her sister-in-law. Thus both of them are allowed by her to enter into the house. In earlier times the mother-in-law would lead them into the kitchen because these were made of brick and mud and such mud-ovens had a number of top-holes. Here the couple was asked to sit on two such holes and the mother would serve three spoons of curd to each. In view of the present L.P.G. stoves the formality is completed by their presence in the kitchen. Then the bride is taken to the place where the priest had made a mark of a creeper like plant on the wall called, the '*DivtI Mu:n*' with the help of lime stone powder and the vermilion on the eve of DivIgo>n of the groom. Actually the seating arrangement of the entire guests and the couple is arranged in this very room on the arrival of the bride.

5. *Mati' Mo>har* -Presents for the mother-in- law.

The bride enters the house of her in-laws with her face veiled [1]. No body can remove her veil unless her mother-in-law observes a glimpse of her face first and for this purpose she has to please her by presenting a golden ornament, cash present or a costly shawl/suit/sari, etc. This is in addition to the gifts brought by her for her mother-in-law and other members of the family. It is only after performing this function that other younger people and other ladies of the house can see the bride.

On the face of it, the custom appears to be a superfluous function under the present circumstances where the boys and the girls move freely every where much earlier to their actual marriage. But if we go a little deeper to locate the purpose behind such an act, things will automatically become clear. As already pointed out, the display of a girl was not considered as a healthy sign by the ancient society of Kashmir Pandits. In my opinion, it was giving the mother an occasion to manage the situation in case the bride was not as beautiful as they expected her to be or possessed some physical defect affecting her beauty.

After having a look of the bride, the young ladies take her to a separate room and change her dress and the headgear etc. She is now beautifully dressed in a sari, decorated with the ornaments, which have been made for her by her in-laws. The groom too changes his dress, takes off all the garlands and removes the turban . After brushing his hair and resting for a while they take a cup of tea and leave for the bride's parental house for dinner. At this time

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[1] The custom is recorded here on the basis of the social structure of the Valley during by gone days. In the modern age of freedom and frankness all these things appear to be a narration from a fairy tail.

they travel alone by a car or taxi, as they have to return back the same night to their residence.

On reaching the bride's parental house the father-in-law of the groom leads them into the house. The son- in -law exchanges a nutmeg and a coin with the ones presented to him by his father-in-law who, besides the nutmeg and a coin, gives a golden ornament to him as a present for his first entrance into the house after marriage. This function is called, '*Za:phal Badla:wun*'. At this time the younger people assembled at the bride's place, ask her questions about her first experiences at the in-laws house. After taking a few morsels they are given a send off with a number of gifts. Besides this, two small kids, preferably the younger brother and sister of the bride, accompany them. The female folk at the groom's house are still busy with dancing and singing till the new couple arrives. On their arrival all the singers and dancers stop playing and remain busy till food etc is served to the guests accompanying the couple. It, generally, is a late hour feast at the groom's residence.

6. KuTh dyun - Allotment of a Separate Room.

In the meantime the friends and the younger brothers of the groom decorate the room for the new couple artistically. All scents and incense sticks, flowerpots and bouquets make the room charming. The mother of the groom, taking a cup of curd and a few pieces of bread in her hand, leads the new couple to their room and while checking all arrangements she serves the curd and bread to the couple. After this function all the members of the family and the guests take a night's rest.

In the past when child marriages were common, this function was held as a separate function after a few years when the groom and the bride attained the age of maturity. In Kashmir child marriage was called, '*Ro>nyan PeTh*'. Hence the function of giving a separate

room to the wedded couple was celebrated with greater pomp and show, though after a few years after the actual wedding.

b) Post-marriage Functions held on subsequent days.

1. *Pra:ya:chit* - Expiation.

'*Kanya:da:n*' is considered to be the greatest act of charity in the Indian ethos. It is viewed more sacred than all the charities including '*Bhumidan*', '*Goadan*' and even the '*Ashawadan*'. To pay his reverence to the gods and deities for the smooth completion of the function, the donor of the girl, holds a special function on the next day of the marriage, called '*Pra:ya:chit*'. A salted yellow dish of rice called, '*TAhAr*' is prepared and after offering different ingredients and ghee to Holy *Agni*, the priest makes oblations to a number of gods and deities according to the scriptures. The ceremonial kitchen for all these days, the stove/oven on which the dishes/rice were prepared, the birds and all other deities get the portion of their share from the oblation and the rest is served to all those present on the occasion along with the members of the family. It is only after making the offerings of various ingredients and ghee to the Sacred Fire that the members of the family, who have kept a fast on the eve of their daughter's marriage known as '*Ka:h*', can break their fast and can eat any solid food after performing this ritual called '*Pra:ya:chit*'.

This is the last ritual of the wedding function held at the bride's house. The guests have since returned to their respective homes. Things, which had been brought on hire, have already been returned. The guests who had made cash presents to the host on the eve of the daughter's marriage called, '*Gulimyu:Th*' and those guest-ladies who fall under the category of daughters, they and their husbands are

given cash presents in return, called '*AtI- gath*'. In this way the family members are now free to re-set their house and its belongings according to their need and choice. From now onwards the family feels the absence of the daughter and with the passage of time they get used to her absence.

2. *Ko>shal Hom* -
Thanks giving at the Groom's House

It is a function held by the groom's father at his residence on the next day of the marriage or *Yagnyopavita* of his son. He performs a small ritual in order to offer his thanks to the gods and deities for the smooth performance of the function called, '*Ko>shal Hom*'. Here too the special yellow rice, called '*TAhAr*', is prepared and after making offerings to all the deities and gods, the sanctified '*Naived*' portion of it is given to all those who are present there on the occasion. The father of the groom arranges a feast on this day and invites some of his close relatives and friends to this special feasting. After the lunch is over the guests leave for their homes. The articles taken on hire are returned to the concerned. The daughters and daughters-in-law who were invited to the function as special guests and who had offered '*Gulimyu:Th*' to the hostess on the marriage/ *yagnyopavita* (as the case may be), are paid '*AtI Gath*' and '*Ho>rIvIni*'"[1] respectively and they take leave. In this way the house is as calm as before from now onwards.

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1 '*AtIgath*' is paid to those ladies who attend the marriage/ *yagnyopavita* and fall under the category of daughters and '*Ho>rIvIni*' is paid to those ladies who fall under the category of daughters-in law. The ritual of '*Ko>shal Hom*' is held in the case of son's marriage or '*Yajnyopavita*',.

3. *TrankI Ha:vun* - Displaying the Dowry.

On a specific day decided upon earlier, all the close relatives of the family assemble at the groom's house for this ceremony. It is more or less a ladies' function and is generally held in the afternoon after the lunchtime is over. The mother-in-law gives the keys of the trunks to the bride, which till then had remained with her, partly due to the busy schedule of the bride and partly out of reverence towards her mother-in-law. The daughter-in-law in turn hands them over to any of her elder sisters-in-law (*DIrka:kani* or *Za:m,* as the case may be) as a gesture of respect. All the trunks, suitcases, etc. brought by her from her parental house, are brought in the middle of a room and opened one by one. The presents brought by her are shown to one and all that attend the function. The suits of the bride, the presents made to the groom by the in-laws, and those meant for the family members, called the '*Pariwa:r*' are all shown to each person turn by turn. A display and a mention is made of the items presented to the groom/bride either on some earlier occasions (prior to marriage) or one the eve of the marriage by their friends and relatives. The presents meant for the family members which include the grand/mother-in-law, all the aunts from the parental as well as maternal sides of the groom and all her sisters-in–law in her new house, are handed over to the concerned at this very moment. The remaining items are kept back in their respective trunks. Last of all, the trunk containing house-hold utensils, known as '*SatIra:th*' is shown to the gathering and in this way the function comes to an end. The trunks, etc., are shifted into the room of the bride from this date, so that she keeps all the things according to her own choice and liking.

4. *Sha:ndI KAr* –
Present for the Father- in- law's Sister.

On the eve of marriage or *yagnyopavita*, the sister of the groom's father is the most important female member in the whole family after the hostess. She performs all-important services in her brother's house on all religious functions including marriage. Her presence, as we have seen, is essential at the time of preparation of '*VAr*', chopping of wood or grinding of spices either on the eve of *Yagnyopavita* or marriage. She formally starts the cleaning of the house. She arranges all the essential items on the '*Divgo<n*" ritual, and she makes the night of 'henna' more charming. She prepares the rice, sweet milk-rice pudding, cakes of rice flour and '*Moong*' '*Mon>gI Wari*" on the eve of '*Divgo>n*' and the rice prepared by her is used as an oblation for all the rituals held during the *Yagnyopavita Sanskar*. Hence her importance on the arrival of the bride in the house cannot be ignored. She gets a special present from the bride known as, '*ShandI KAr*'. Literarily this is a combination of two words, '*Sha:ndI*' and '*KAr*'. '*Sha:nd*', meaning the 'head rest of a bed-stead -- a 'pillow' or 'the upper most part of a bedding'. Besides, there is a pun on the word '*KAr*'. The literal meaning of this word is the 'link/beam' or 'the rafter'. We have seen that all the house-hold chores on such functions of joy is supervised by the '*Pu:fi:*', as she is commonly called and, in these circumstances she might have been in charge of arranging the bedding, etc., for the new couple. Hence named as, '*Sha:ndI Kar;*' or '*Shayan Kar*', meaning a tax/ gratification paid to the *Pu:fi:* for arranging the nuptial room for the weds. It is an admitted fact that the pillow, '*Shand*' is an important item of the bedding. In this way she arranges a comfortable night's resting place for the couple after the hectic day. Hence known as '*ShandI KAr*' in a changed phonetic order.

In the days gone by, a special piece of brocade was considered as the piece of decoration among all the presents brought by the bride, including those which were meant for the family members as well. This piece of brocade was meant for the '*Pu:fi:*'. Due to the changed conditions, a suitable *Sari* suit is kept for her along with a piece of brocade in the trunk now. But this much goes beyond doubt that this present has a special significance and is in addition to the presents meant for the family members out of which the '*Pu:f:i*' also gets her due share.

5. *RoTh Khabar* - Welfare Information

Soon after the bride's father is free from the marriage rituals, he fixes a day for sending a messenger to the groom's house to invite his daughter back to her parental house as a good will gesture. It may not befit the first messenger of the parents to go to the in-laws of the daughter for such an invitation without any presents. Therefore, arrangement for preparation of a special bakery, called '*RoTh*' is made well in advance. Besides, ground nuts, sweetmeats, sugar candy, toffees, walnuts, almonds and a few packets (at least eleven or even more) of sweets preferably '*Barfi*' weighing two Kg. each, are arranged for the occasion and put in a big steel trunk and sent to the daughter-in-laws house either on the coming Saturday or Tuesday after the marriage [1]. This function is known as, '*RoTh Khabar*'. On receiving the '*RoTh Khabar*' the bride is at liberty to

[1] It is the only ritual of social nature which is performed either on a Saturday or Tuesday, otherwise considered as the most inauspicious days of the week for initiating any new job, according to the Indian ethos.

come to the parental house on any of the auspicious days.

On receiving *'RoTh Khabar'* the activities at the groom's house increase, as they have to distribute all these items among their relatives, friends and neighbours.

6. PhirI Sa:l

First invitation to the son-in-law.

After a few days rest, the father of the bride fixes a date for the first invitation to the newly wed. On the scheduled date the bride and the groom, his younger brothers/cousins and a few of his fast friends, all reach to the in-law's house of the groom at the schedule time. It is a function of considerable importance for the host. He also invites some of his own relatives on this occasion and in this way the function becomes an extended one. After the lunch is finished, the bride and the groom are presented gifts in the form of a suit each for the bride and the groom or some golden ornament for the bride and a wristwatch or an article of groom's choice. The young boys/girls accompanying the couple, are given cash presents of rupees one hundred and one or more, on the basis of reciprocity. All the guests' leave after taking tea in the afternoon, the bride is given a packet of salt, a Sari, ATIho>r, loaves of bread, and pocket money, *'AtI gath'*, at the time of her departure.

During the earlier days this function was extended over a number of days and nearly all the guests would stay at the host's house for a number of days but now this function is completed in a single day

7. *PhirI LaTh*

Second Invitation to the son-in-law.

After a lapse of a fortnight or so from the date of the marriage, the father invites his daughter and the son-in-law a second time on an auspicious day. It is a very simple function and after taking tea and lunch etc., the couple is at liberty to leave. After this function the bride and the groom or both can pay a visit to their house as and when they wish so. At the time of their departure the bride is given a packet of salt, a Sari,some loaves of bread and '*AtI Gath.*' It may be pointed out that the groom has a social binding not to visit the in-laws house on his own, unless otherwise necessary, till this function is held by his in-laws.

8. HA:ZIRI:

Visit of the close relatives of the Bride.

During the days of stay of the bride at her husband's house, relatives from her maternal side, '*Ma:ta:ma:l'* aunts, '*Ma:si:' and 'Pu:fi::*', show their presence at the bride's house with their presents etc., Though they come to the residence of their daughter but they do not enter the house until the formal entry on the date of '*GarI Atsun*' function is held by the father of the groom in consultation with the father of the bride. This type of formal attendance is called '*HA:zi:ri:"* The said relatives of the bride come along with various presents just to express their good wishes to the newly married couple. Giving of such gifts depends on reciprocity extended by the parents of the bride earlier to such of their relatives at the time of marriage of their children.

9. Cha:y ChawIvIni - Serving Tea for the First Time.

The bride is given rest for a period of a week or so. Besides, she remains busy with invitation schedules during all this time and thus, she is not asked for any help in the day-to-day chores of the house. The fact is that the father of the groom had wished for this additional hand to help the members of the family in the day-to-day household chores. With this fact in mind the head of the family asks the bride, on an auspicious day, to prepare tea for all the family members. The bride arranges all the ingredients for such a special tea a few days earlier and on the scheduled day she presents herself before every member of the family with a cup of hot fragrant tea. All the members, after taking tea, place their presents in cash in the cups. The elderly people pay more while the young pay according to their own choice and age. Some affluent people present golden ornaments to their daughter-in-law on this occasion. From this date she takes the charge as a helper in the kitchen and thus she becomes a helping hand to her mother-in-law in her household chores. The presents thus given to the daughter-in-law at this function are a kind of good will to her to act as a helping hand in the family chores from thenceforth.

10. GarI Atsun - First formal Invitation extended by the two families for entrance in one another's house.

It is one of the post-marriage functions. Some people celebrate it just after the marriage while others postpone it till such a type of function is again held in the family. The heads of the two families meet and arrive at an agreement to hold the function on two consecutive

days, one meant for the bride's parental relatives and the other for the groom's people. It is considered as one of the major functions after the marriage. The concerned families invite some of their close relatives, friends and neighbours on the basis of reciprocity, to attend and participate in the function. The rationale in respect of the function is the same as discussed under the heading, '*Yagnyopavita*' (*Divgo>n*), but it differs when the groom's family is invited on a similar occasion. They have neither to take any trunks nor any kind of clothes/dresses, etc. instead the parents of the bride offer presents to their son-in-law and his parents besides the cash offerings. In both the cases the feasting is held on a large scale and in a friendly but formal atmosphere.

In this way the rituals and social functions, which follow soon after the marriage, come to an end. There are a number of other rituals and social function, that continue for the full year, and even some of these are of such nature that the parents of the bride have to wait for a few years for the performance of those rituals and rites. A description of all such rites and functions will follow.

c) The Festivals of the First Year of Marriage.

1. Vo>har VA:di - **Birth Days.**

Soon after the hectic engagements that follow the marriage ceremony are over and the daughter-in-law feels a bit relieved, she prepares a table of the birth dates of all the relatives of her in-law family members with the help of her mother-in-law. She brings '*Sho>gun*' [1] from her parents for further transfer to the persons concerned on such birthdays. It may be pointed out that such lists are

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[1]. An omen or a gift in cash or kind presented to the bridegroom after the settlement of marriage or thereafter.

prepared on the advice of the mother-in-law and on the basis of reciprocity, i.e. she includes the names of all those persons in the list from whom she or any member of her family has received a similar kind of '*Sho>gun*' on some earlier occasion/s. Such lists generally include almost all the members of the family and some of the selected uncles on the paternal as well as maternal sides of the groom.

Among the birthdays of the family members, the birthdays of the grand/father-in-law and that of the husband, top the list because on these occasions the father of the bride has to arrange many more gifts. For instance on the birthday of the father-in-law of his daughter, he has to arrange some vessels of curd and bakery items and some sweets besides, the usual '*Sho>gun*' in cash. On the birthday of his son-in-law, the bride's father, besides the things listed above, has to arrange a costly suite and some golden ornaments for his son-in-law and the daughter. She has to arrange just cash present ranging from rupees one hundred and one up to five hundred and one (based on reciprocity) for the birthdays of the rest of the relatives. It may be added that cash payments on such occasions differ according to the social and economic status of the two families.

2. *Ne'trI Vo>har Vo<d* - Marriage Anniversary.

After the expiry of one year from the date of marriage, the 'Marriage Anniversary' is celebrated. The husband and wife get a suit each from the parents of the bride. They also get presents from their parents and relatives and friends. As on all the birthdays, yellow rice, known as '*TAhARr*' is prepared and after due benedictions, it is served to one and all present or invited on the occasion. A good feasting is also held on this occasion at the house of the groom. Affluent families arrange big gatherings on this date and enjoy it in the company of their

relatives, friends and well-wishers. The solitude loving couples enjoy themselves on an outing at a hill station or at a health resort.

Besides the above festivals of the year, there are a number of other festivals of general nature on which the newly wed girl has to bring the presents from her parents. Though the number of such festivals is large yet a mention of a few of them is included in this narration.

Shra:vnI Punim - Raksha Bandhan.

Though the presence of a recently married girl is most essential in her new house on this date yet her in-laws allow her to visit her parent's house to tie the '*Rakhi:*' on the wrist of her brother if she is fortunate to have one. She returns to her in-laws house soon after completing the ceremony along with gifts of fruit and sweets for her in-laws and some clothes for her self as '*Sho>guṇ*'. The father of the groom has to distribute the sweets and the fruit among his neighbours and close relatives on the same day.

4. *ZarmI Satam - Janam AshTami.*

On this day too fruits and sweets come from the newly married girl's parental houses, but on this date the quantity of such presents is much more than the presents offered on the earlier occasion of '*Raksha Bandhan*'. The girl gets a suit of clothing from her parents, besides the sweets; they arrange curd and milk for their daughter on this day. The father of the groom has to arrange for the distributions of all these things among his relatives and neighbours on the same day.

5, Shishur La:gun - **Festival of the first winter.**

This is one among the most important functions, known as *'Siushur'*, held at the grooms residence in the beginning of *'Po>h'*, the ninth month of the *Vikram* era. One day preceding the function, provided it is an auspicious day of the week, a little of seasmum and a pinch of lime powder is put together into a duly stitched triangular patch made of brocade, and it is known as *'Shishar Goar'* [1]. It is then stitched or pinned on the head side of the *'Sari'* of the bride, which she has got from her parents on the occasion. Besides, the *Sari* suit, the bride gets some cash presents and a hunted wild duck as a present from her parents for her in-laws. She also gets a *Sari* suit from her in-laws on the occasion. Early in the morning on the day of the function all the relatives, friends and neighbours who are invited by the host on a special feast, assemble. The daughter-in-law, well dressed in her new suit along with a decorated fire pot known as *'Shishar Ka:ngIr'* in her right hand, enters into the room of feasting. Both, the suit and the fire-pot, for the bride come from her parents. The fire pot is without any fire or charcoals in it. After feasting is over, she approaches every person with a box of tooth picks in her left hand and the *'Ka:ngari'* in her right hand. Every body, whether young or old, puts some cash present into the *'Ka:ngari'* as his/her share to the bride on this special feast. Everybody, whether old or young, has to pay for his/her participation in the feasting on this occasion.

In addition to the presents mentioned above, the father of the girl has to arrange a good number of loves of bread, thirty to fifty kilos of curd and considerable quantity of cooked meat, called *'QAliyi'*to be presented to the in-laws of his daughter and send it to the house of

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[1] This function is held in the month of *'Pausha'* or *'Po>h'* on the first year of the birth of a new-born also.

the groom. The father of the groom has to make arrangements for its distribution among all the relatives and neighbours on the same day. Due to the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the valley, making of such presents in kind have subsided but making presents in cash has increased four-fold.

6. *He'rath - Shiva Ra:tri:.*

On the eve of the first *Shiva Ra:tri*, the father of the girl has to arrange a new dress for his daughter, a costly '*Ka:ngri*' , cash and other presents for all the small and younger children of the family, called the '*He'rIts KharIch*', and after the festival is over he has to arrange a good number of walnuts and loaves of bread and some cash called '*He'rIts Bhog*' for distribution among the relatives and neighbours at the in-laws house of the daughter. In addition to this the maternal relatives of the bride too send their share of '*He'rIts KharIch/Bhog*' in the form of walnuts, loaves of bread and cash presents to the in-laws of the bride on the eve of this festival for the first year.

7. *Nav Reh* - New year's day.

The parents of the girl arrange a new suit for their daughter on this date and send it to her in-laws early in the morning. The in-laws arrange an outing for the newly married couple and other children of the house on this day.

8. *ZangI Tray-*
Third day of the New Year for Ladies.

On this day the ladies, all young and old, go to their parent's house early in the morning and return in the evening with gifts like a packet of salt, an '*ATIho>r*' and '*AtI gath*'. The parents of the newly married girls arrange for an outing for their sons-in-law and the

daughters and celebrate the day in a very special way. In the evening they return to their homes with all the presents mentioned above.

In this way all the festivals of the year come to an end. It may be added here that the presents like the packet of salt, an '*ATIho>r*' and some cash in the form of '*AtI gath*' is always paid to the daughter throughout her life when ever she visits the parental house on their invitation.

d) Other functions of General Nature.

1. NavI Shi:n - The First Snow Fall.

The members of the family where the marriage of a son has taken place recently, wait eagerly for the first snowing of the winter. They peep through the windows early in the morning. In case it is snowing, a member of the family gets up and wraps a little of snow in a piece of paper so as to look as if something has been kept well protected and duly wrapped. When they are satisfied that the thing looks just like a parcel, they manage it to be kept near the bed of the bride while she is asleep. When she wakes up she opens the parcel unknowingly and soon there is a loud clap and the members of the family, mostly the younger ones, cry joyously '*NavI Shi:n*', the ' new snow'. Every body enjoys this moment in the family including the bride who has to arrange and bring a hunted wild duck as a present from her parents to her in-laws. The case could be vice versa as well provided the daughter-in-law is witty enough to apply the same formula to any elderly member of her husband's family. In that case the person thus caught, has to arrange a wild duck for the family feasting.

2. *Do>d Dyun* - First Pregnancy.

On hearing that their daughter is pregnant, her parents start counting days for her delivery. This function is either held in the seventh or in the ninth month of pregnancy keeping in view the health condition of the lady. On the scheduled date and on an auspicious day, the parents arrange bakery, meat cooked in turmeric and other spices excluding chilies, curd, a new dress for the daughter, a packet of salt, an *ATIho>r*, some cash in lieu of bread and meat and '*AtIgath*' for their daughter. On the scheduled day the girl goes to her in-laws with all these articles and the parents of the groom arrange a feast in their house on this occasion. They have also to make arrangement for the distribution of all the things brought by their daughter-in-law among the relatives and neighbours. From this date onwards, the daughter-in-law remains in the in-law's house till her delivery. The rituals and customs which are in vogue at present in our society and are connected with our pre-birth, post-birth functions up to the attainment of '*Grahastha Ashrama*', as already discussed in the earlier chapters of this book, are again repeated on the birth of a new-comer in the family.

Chapter Seven

IV) Sanskars and Rituals connected with the *GRAHASTH ASHRAM* - The Family Life.

The desire for having a child is one of the main motivations in married life. In this way the child is an outcome of a basic desire. Actually life itself is a manyfold combination of desires and every one's aim in life is to go ahead and flourish in this world. Man is born with desires or we can say that desires are born along with a man. After ones child-hood, the second stage of life is to attain knowledge through *Brahmcharya* or schooling, and here starts the most important stage of ones first *'Ashram'* which is spread over a period of first 25 years of ones life. This is followed by the second stage or *Ashram*, the '*Grtahasth Ashram*' in which one wants to express oneself through all ones actions and achievements. Here the man needs a helper who can stand by him through all thick and thin. Thus, his spouse comes forward as his helper, which necessarily involves marriage *Sanskar.* In order to meet the day-to-day needs and requirements at this stage, man becomes an animal in the real sense having four legs to strive for the fulfillment of his desires.

Though out worldly he concentrates fully for the betterment of his family, yet at his inner thoughts he strives for achieving the ultimate goal of spiritual height, i,e. final 'salvation.' Every man is born with four human pursuits. These are 'virtue', 'wealth', 'sensual enjoyment,' and 'salvation'. Of these, a man attains the first through education during the days of his schooling and the remaining three are left to be achieved by him during the rest of his life. A man tries his utmost to get as much of wealth as he can by all means, fair or foul. The Almighty has also associated five elements with man, known as '*Pancha Su:na*' according to the scriptures, which keep the householder busy day and night. The aforesaid five elements prove a great drain on all his wealth and earnings.

These are, according to our *Dharama Shastra*, (1) the hearth, (2) the grinding stone, (3) the broom, (4) the mortar and pestle, and (5) water vessels. All these things consume a major part of ones time and are a drain on ones earnings. As the head of his family, he has not only to look after his own requirements, but also as a member of this society and as a part of his immediate environment, he has some duties towards all that comprise it or are a part and parcel of it. It is for this very reason that our scriptures have advised that '*Pancha Kaval*', the five morsels of cooked food be kept aside, one each for a dog, a sinner, a leper, a sick person, and a crow. Though we consider all these praxis as something outdated and un-necessary because of our limited understanding and knowledge, but our scriptures have given due place and importance to them in the society and for the good of our immediate environment. Man has been bestowed with three qualities, '*Guna*'. The first is the quality of goodness '*Satva*'. It is followed by ignorance and darkness called the '*Tama*'. It would have taken all men down into the depths of hell and darkness had there not been the '*Satva*' to save him from going down deeper. The third quality in man is '*Rajoguna*' which develops the worldly desires and passions in him and which is considered to be the main cause of vice in a man. The three pursuits of man i.e., 'love', duty' and 'wealth' remain under the influence of these three qualities or '*Guna*'. Under this influence he always thinks in the terms of either total 'gain', or 'loss' or in the terms of neither 'gain' nor 'loss', i.e., 'equality' in every sphere of his life. The result is that ' love' does not remain absolute. 'Love' when extended as a 'duty' becomes doubtful. This sort of thinking suits a man, who has lust for wealth and who, while embarking upon a project, thinks in terms of 'gain', 'loss', or 'equality'. Once the darkness is dispelled from the mind of a man, his main task of completing the daily ceremonies known as '*Maha Yajnya*' take primary place and bless him with the sweet

fruit of salvation. The five ceremonies thus expounded by the scriptures are :-

1. The study of the religious scriptures,
2. Making of offerings to gods,
3. 'Reasonable reception of guests,'
4. 'Offerings to be made to deities, Rishis and manes, and
5 Putting food on the ground for insects.

According to the scriptures a man after marriage *Sanskar* has to perform the following duties: -

1, Duties as head of the family,
2, Duties as a father, and,
3, duties as a son.

While performing all the above mentioned duties man is obliged to perform the following '*Yajnya:s*', 'sacrifices' on account of his attachment with a family: -

1. *Brahma Yajnya:*,
2. *Pitri Yajnya,*
3. *Deva Yajnya*,
4. *Bhu:ta Yajnya*, and,
5. *Nara Yajnya*

As the head of a family and for the betterment of his children, a married person has been advised to perform the '*Brahma Yajnya*' meaning recitations from the Vedas known as '*Swadhyaya*'. It purifies his heart and pure heart is considered as the abode of God. The goal of attaining the '*Brahma*' also involves '*Deva Yajnya*' by making offerings to gods and deities. For the safeguard of his children and other family members, he performs the '*Bhuta Yajnya*' so as to ward off the effects of all kinds of which-craft or black magic on his own self and on the other members of his family. He is also bound to feed all the members of the family for their survival and this service is called as '*Nara Yajnya*'. As a son and as an bread earning member of the family he is to look after to the day to day needs of his parents and looking after parents involves '*Pitri Yajnya*' Besides he has to get the blessings of his fore-fathers, who are in the heavens now. This is done by performing their '*Shra:dha.*' At the core of his heart, he has great devotion and love for the teachers who have made him able and trained to lead a

successful life. All these acts are included in the daily activities of a person. In order to enable him to fulfill the three obligations like, the '*Deva Rin,*' the '*Rishi Rin,*' and the '*Pitri Rin*' he is brought into the fold of the '*Brahamnical*' order by his parents by performing the '*Yagnyopativa*' ceremony. This state of affairs continues till a person attains the age of fifty years and during this period his own children grow and they in turn perform and repeat all these duties when they attain the age of *Brahmacharya, Grahasth* and other *Ashrams* and thus the un-ending circle continues forever.

Chapter Eight

(V) Sanakars and Rituals connected with the *Va:N PRASTH* - Seclusion from the Family Life.

It is the third stage in the life of a twice- born and covers the span of a man's life from fifty to seventy five years. During this stage a man is directed to opt for seclusion for penance so that he can understand and evaluate religious treatises, elucidate the past experiences and ponder over the good and the bad deeds experienced and executed by him during his previous stages of life. It is the age of introspection, analysing in detail the past acts and experiences of life and evaluating them in the light of the directions given in our Holy Scriptures. He has to do all these things while living in a family yet without involving himself with the family. He shares his experiences with his family members and evaluates all the problems emerging due to the generation gap and it's over all impact on the society. Thus he acts as a teacher for the development and betterment of the whole society, besides being the head of his own family. Here his assessment of things and happenings in his family or in the society around him will be better or worse than those experienced by him during his lifetime. It is in the fitness of things for his own self and the society as a whole, to allow a considerable gap between his own self, the society he belongs and the family of which he is a member. More so when a person is in the advanced stage of his '*Va:nprasth Ashram*.' While keeping an eye on all these family matters and dealings, he is advised to develop an attitude of detachment and aloofness so as to prepare himself for the '*Sannyas Ashram*'. A person who learns to live a detached life like a lotus in a muddy pond and yet untouched by the muddy-water, is considered to be a successful person going through this important stage of

life known as the *'Vanprasth Ashram'* according to the Indian way of living.

How can a person, who has spent all his life in comforts, be expected to take to *Sannyas,* i.e., renunciation, at once? There has to be a preparation for taking such a bold step and according to the scriptures, it is necessary that before going for the *Sannyas Ashram* one should take the *Vanprasth Ashram* more seriously so as to practice detachment for a period of twenty five years which ultimately leads a man to complete renunciation. According to the scriptures, the *Vanprasth Ashram* has to begin at the age of fifty years and by the time one attains the age of seventy-five years, he is expected to be mentally and spiritually prepared for total detachment needed for *Sannyas Ashram,* also named as complete '*Tyaga*'. Adopting a life of complete detachment and seclusion without proper training and preparation can prove disastrous for all, the individual, the family and the society.

Chapter Nine

(VI) Sanskars and Rituals connected with the *SANNYAS ASHRAM* Stage of Renunciation

Sannyas means renunciation or abandonment of worldly ties. It is also named as the asceticism or monasticism. This *Ashram* begins at the age of 75 years of ones life and continues up to the age of one hundred years, provided the blessing of '*Ji:va sharda shatam*' comes true for an individual. This is the stage when a person is required to renounce or abandon family ties and all other family and worldly relations. During all this period a person is advised to give up all his family ties and live like a hermit and spend all his time and energy in the worship of God and in reading the Holy Scriptures. He should be a teacher of his own self through his own experiences and also from the experiences gained by him in the attainment of a heavenly life after the dissolution of his physical body. He should be able to teach and preach the Holy Scriptures to others and must consider whole world to be a large family, which in the real sense is nothingness and an illusion. In the words of some of our great sages and seers, "There is often not much difference between the robe and the rogue." In the world of cheap popularity and constant and speedily developing scandals, it is difficult to think of *Sannyas* as a sacred undertaking. The lust for more has brought the man and the noble thought of being a *Sannyasi* to a very sad state. But still *Sannyas* is the only stage that can take man away from worldly illusions and all other odds because it is the prerequisite of *Sannyas* to alter the state of mind first and then advocate the change of robe or its colour. It may also be safe to say that once we achieve and accept the change in the state of our mind, changing of our robes and our life styles becomes entirely optional. *Sannyas* requires us to think in a new way. At the very first, it makes us to

believe that by adopting it, a man becomes a loser because we have to renounce all our ties with the material world but actually renunciation offers us a chance for winning in the form of self realisation. Once the notion of duality is erased from the mind of a man, understanding becomes clearer to him. In *Sannyas*, we do not see the 'other' and all that we see is "I", known as '*Ananya*', meaning 'without any second'. There is no other divine device that can be considered to be the key to renunciation or to the *Sannyas Ashram*. [1]

By adopting the path of *Sannyas* we enter into '*Ananya Yoga*'- a way of thinking in which we lose ourselves in the undivided and unrestricted love for Him which till then we considered as the 'other'. In the language of mysticism losing ones own self is to discover Him. Through *Sannyas* we make it possible for our generations to follow us and to learn the art of survival from negation. *Sannyas* is not something of an externally imposed rule but a guideline for leading a healthier and happier life within through spiritual awareness. It is not an act of mindlessness or ignorance of right action and thought instead it is a path taken to find the Truth and needs our full concentration. There are guidelines in scriptures for our interacting with the outer world. These guidelines, in our relationship with others are based on the five golden pillars, namely, 1 *Ahimsa* (non-violence), 2.. *Saty* (truthfulness), 3. As*aty* (non-stealing), 4. .*Brahmchary* (celibacy), and 5. *Aparigrah* - (non-covetousness). *Patanjali's Yoga Vasishtha* has named them as the five '*Yamas*' , (restraints), which, according to him, are followed by five *Niyamas*, (observances). In this way the *Niyamas* form as the basic constituents and are about how we should interact with our own self and with our internal instincts. These provide us the means of

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[1] *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita*, Chpat. 12, verse 6.

self-regulation and help us to maintain a conducive environment in which we grow. The five *Niyamas* are :- 1 *Shauch* - (Purity), 2. *Santosh,* (contentment), 3. *Tap* - (austerity) , 4. *Swadhyay* (self - education) and 5. *Ishwar Parinidhan* - (meditation). The last i.e., meditation is the dedication of all our actions to the Divine. The dedication of *Radha,* towards Lord Krishna has aptly been explained in the *Bhagwat Purana,* (Krishna Lila). It relates that all the *Gopis* were jealous of *Radha* for she, according to their thought, received more attention from *Krishna.* One day the *Gopis* complained to Lord *Krishna* about his adopting this double standard. Lord *Krishna* answered that *Radha* had 'devotion'. The *Gopis* were not ready to accept this explanation. In order to explain the real 'dedication' to the *Gopis, Krishna* one day pretended that one of his fingers was wounded and was bleeding profusely. All the *Gopis* ran here and there. Some started searching for cotton wool and others ran for a piece of cloth to bandage it while the finger continued bleeding profusely. *Radha* came to know about this and she came running, tore a portion of her *Sari* and bandaged the finger of *Krisha* while the *Gopis* still continued their search for the cotton and a piece of rag. In this way Lord *Krishna* explained to them the true essence of '*Tyag*' and complete devotion towards the Divine.

Chapter Ten

(VII) Rituals and Customs pertaining to the

Antim Sanskar - *The Last Rites.*

There are a number of words in vogue like, '*Marun*', '*Mrityu*', *So>rgs gatsun*' for 'death,' 'breathing last' or the 'Eternal Journey', prevalent in Kashmir for this natural phenomenon. Some of these words have retained the original Sanskrit form while some have undergone slight phonetic changes due to the passage of time. We often think that the dying person loses in a single moment this whole world, his body, home, job, house, his relatives - every thing that he thought belonged to him just a few minutes before. All the losses that could not possibly be experienced in the whole life join together to make one overwhelming loss when one dies. So a man does some pre-thinking and even preparations so as to keep himself ready for meeting his death, which is every body's ultimate lot. It is because of this very fact that a man considers death to be always near him like his shadow.

Scholars have described five stages in the process of coming to terms with death. These are generally known as, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. In the prime of youth every body denies the existence of death. But with the advancement of age the other stages follow. Of course, it is not necessary for every body to go through all these stages. For some people the road to the acceptance of death as a reality may be too long and full of hurdles and thorns whereas some of us may not even reach to that stage of acceptance at all. Ours is a culture, which is full of beliefs, rites, rituals, and superstitions, which we cannot understand unless we place them against a right perspective. While accepting this natural phenomenon we find ourselves like most other people - facing death as a challenge, as if we have been cheated and consequently we

feel frustrated and angry. Whether it is frustration or anger, we should try to ask the dying person to consider death as a natural process. Feelings of repressed emotions, sadness, numbness, guilt and jealousy may develop in a dying person for those who are still alive and healthy. We should help the dying not to suppress these emotions when they arise. We should be with him as and when the pain of death and grief overtake him. The emotions slowly subside and change into serenity, calmness and sanity. One should neither try to be wise before a dying person nor say something to make things look better. We should remain with him as long as we can. If we feel that we are more anxious or fearful, we should accept it openly before the dying person and tell him about it. This will surely bring one close to the dying person and it shall ultimately open a freer communication between the two. Sometimes a dying man knows far better than any one else as to how he can be helped, and one should know how to draw on his wisdom and let him give to us what he knows better than we do. On a higher spiritual level, the dying person has clear intellect whether he realizes it or not and the dying man has a potential for complete enlightenment. As the dying man comes closer to death, this possibility increases manifold and in many ways. So the dying deserve more care and respect. Here we shall recall that Lord *Ram* directed his younger brother, *Lakshman* to go with utmost reverence near the dying *Ravan*, who was considered as a man of great learning. He was directed to know from him certain codes of higher values in life. In the same way Lord *Krishna* directed *Arjun* to approach *Bhishm Pitamah*, who had laid himself on a bed of arrows for the same reason. In both the cases, the Epiçs tell about the 'short term disciples' going before their 'short term *Gurus*' and both stand with reverence near their head side. But the code of conduct is contrary to this, because as a rule the place of the seeker is just near the feet of his *Guru* and once the set procedure is adopted by the disciples, the *Gurus* reveal to

both of them the desired values and experiences of their life, willingly. Death is an eternal fact and it comes either early or late in one's life. It can come slowly due to disease or due to old age or swiftly due to some accident or violence. A curious misconception seems to prevail in many that coming of death turns a demon into a saint. Whatever would have been the deeds of a person but one thing is sure that the moment he dies, we believe, he becomes practically an angel of goodness. Actually casting off physical body no more alters his disposition than does the casting off his clothes. He is precisely the same man after his death as he was a moment before his death, with the same vices and virtues. But in the astral world he does not get any opportunity of displaying them, though they may manifest themselves in the astral life in a different manner. His stay in the astral world depends on the energy of his lower desires and emotions during his physical existence. Once this energy is exhausted only then can he leave for the higher and more peaceful realms of the upper worlds - heavens. Though the worldly passions are for the time being worn out and meaningless for him at this stage but the germs of the qualities that he has imbibed, are still there. They are latent and ineffective. After his death he leaves the astral world and those qualities can no longer find expression. Such wishes, therefore, remain latent, but when centuries later, on his downward course into a reincarnation, he re-enters the astral realm, these qualities manifest themselves once again, and become the blue print of his next personality. The destination of the soul after death depends on how we shape our consciousness throughout our life. If we carefully consider this, we can understand how our consciousness, at any given moment of time directly determines our next destination in space. It is because of this very fact that our scriptures contain '*Anta mati sa eva gati*' 'the last thoughts are a gateway to the new realms'. This consciousness has many contents including identity, intelligence, thoughts, feelings and

desires. All these develop or take shape according to our association and activities. The three humours of human body called *'Tridosh'* are: - 1. Bile, 2. Phlegm, and 3. Wind. They are the essential elements of our physical body but their existence comes to a fatal end at the time of death [1]. Here the association with saintly persons and spiritual activities are most important to achieve the spiritual consciousness and thus reach to the selected destination at the time of death. Religiousness alone cannot do. No doubt religious teachings explain our relationship with God. We should also know that hell is the farthest point from association and consciousness of God. God-consciousness is very close to heaven. If we are not conscious of God then we are already in hell. Hindu philosophy lays more stress on meditating upon the world beyond than upon the one in which one lives. The living world is considered as a transitory camp whereas the actual abode is the world beyond. That is why more stress has been laid on performing death rituals rightly and regularly.

Sanatan Dharma lays a great emphasis on the rituals performed after the death of a person [2]. Some scholars are of the opinion that a man performs the death rituals of a dead person not for granting any rest or consolation to the deceased but to get rid of the bad and uncalled for repercussions of such happenings to his own self.[3]. Death is the ultimate reality and can neither be escaped nor altered. It has got a special significance as for the *Hindu Dharma* is concerned. The rituals and customs attached with death are tedious and extensive, known as the *'Karma Kanda'*. A man has been following all these rituals and customs since the times immemorial. A man at the verge of death is asked to perform a ritual called, '*Anti*

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[1] *'Pranah priyan samaye Kaf, Vat, Pittah, Kanthah Virodhana vidau sumrinam kutaste.'* Subashitani.
[2] Pnaday, Raj Bali, Hindu Sanakar, Varanasi, P. 296
[3] Ibid, P. 298

Dan', the last charity [1]. Those present give a dying man a spoon of '*Ganga Jal*,' 'water from the *Ganga'*. A small coin, preferably an old copper coin [2], is kept in the mouth of the dead and his/her mouth is closed. The rituals for the dead extend over a period of one year. However, the anniversaries are held year after year according to the lunar calendar after observing the first anniversary called '*WAharwA:r'*. The death rites and customs mainly include:-

1. *AnItsre'Th* or *AnteshTi* - The Last Rites.
2. *Da:h Sanska:r* - Cremation .
3. *AstrIkI Tulni* - Collection of Mortal remains
4. *DAhim Do>h.* - The Tenth day rituals.
5. *Kahim Do>h* - Eleventh day rituals.
6. *BAhim Do>h* - Twelfth day rituals
7. *Challun* - Bathing and Washing.
8. *Pachiwa:rI* - Fortnightly rituals.
9. *Ma:swa:rI* - Monthly rituals
10. *ShaDmo<s* - Rituals at the end of Six months.
11. *Ti:l.* - Offering of oil (ritual.)
12. *WaharwA:r.* - Rituals at the end of one year.
13. *Shra:dha* - Anniversary.
14. *TirthI Shra:dha* - Rituals at a place of pilgrimage.
15. *Dw:adashi* - Performance of *Ba:h.*

1. AnItsrye'Th- (ANTESHTI)- THE LAST RITES.

As soon as the death of a person occurs, a portion in one of the ground floor rooms is cleanly besmeared with clay and water. The sacred grass known as the

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[1] It contains some rice, salt and cash and the dying man is asked to sprinkle it with water.

[2] It is a conception that after the death of a person, he/she has to cross the stream called the, '*Vaitarni*' while proceeding towards the heavens. Here the person has to pay the ferry charges to the boatman for ferrying him/her across the stream. Hence the coin is kept in the mouth of the dead for the purpose.

'*Kusha:*' (*Darbhi GasI*) is spread on it. The dead body is placed with its back on it so that the face remains quite visible. Besides, its head is kept towards south so that the feet remain extended towards the north. At the head side is kept an earthen lamp on a lamp stand. An elderly member of the family recites from the *Bhagwat Gi:ta* while the lady-folk encircle the dead, weeping and wailing. The dead body is kept fully covered with a sheet of cloth. The caps/ turbans of the male members, and the headgears of the ladies, if they wear so, are kept on the sheet covering the dead body from the side of its feet. In the meaṇ time the local potter arrives with a coop containing earthen pots required on the occasion. In the compound, a portion is marked for performing the last rites of the dead and the remaining portion is covered with carpets and sheets, etc. and the male mourners, relatives and neighbours sit on them, in case there is no ample space for sitting inside the house. A person or two start preparing the shroud for the dead. It comprises the inner garment, two pieces of cloth used as under-wear called, '*Shra:nI PaTh*', one before the final bath and the other after it. A head garment or mask known as '*Mo>zu:ri*' and the outer sheet of cloth covering the bier. The outer sheet and the head garment, are dyed in Saffron-water. In the meantime the elder daughter-in-law heats water in the kitchen in one of the earthen pots brought by the potter and also cooks a small pot of rice and some vegetable, preferably potatoes, for the last rites of the dead. The bathing arrangement for the dead is made in the main corridor of the house on a wooden plank. The grand son of the dead rings a small bell on the gate of the house, the entrance is covered with a sheet of cloth till the bathing of the dead and other rituals are completed.

During yester years the death of a person created huge problems in collecting various items required for the last rites. Now these have been kept in stock by a number of socio-religious organisations. Besides, a number of

organizations attached to various cremation grounds have made available biers and wooden planks for bathing the dead. Previously the local carpenter would prepare the bier and the wooden board. This, besides being time consuming, also involved huge expenses. These arrangements have facilitated the job of cremation of the dead to a great extent. Earlier the availability of dry firewood for the cremation of the dead posed great problems: Now it is arranged by these societies at landed cost. In this way much labour and time is saved due to these facilities. The services of the potter and the carpenter under the changed circumstances, have been eliminated as all these things are readily available with these societies.

The word '*AnItsre''Th'* appears to be a direct derivation from the Sanskrit word '*Anteshti:*' meaning the last rites. Once the last bath of the dead is started, the eldest son [1] of the dead or any other person on his behalf starts the last rites with the help of a priest at the place already besmeared for the purpose in the courtyard. The ingredients required on the occasion are: -

1. Barley 2. Barley flour, 3. Ghee, 4. Flowers, 5. Rice (wet), '*ArIg*' 6. Milk, 7. Curd, 8 Saffron 9. Incense, 10. A piece of cloth on which the name '*Ram'*-'*Ram'* is printed, known as '*Ram-Ram PaTh'* 11. Sesame, 12. Honey, 13. *NA:rivan*, (a special red coloured raw thread) 14. An earthen saucer '*Tok*' for kindling the fire in it. 15. Faggots for kindling fire, 16. Earthen pots, one big and two small, '*Va:ri'*, 17. Earthen saucers two '*TA:kyi'*, 18. Small earthen lamps '*tsA:ngi'* ten Nos., 9. *Yagnyopavita*, 20. Vermilion, 21. Cotton, 22. Slippers, 24 Thread, and 25. *Pawitra/PawethIr'*, (a ring made of *Kusha*: grass).

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[1] Abul Fazal, the famous Historian narrates that during the medieval times the younger brother would perform the last rites of his elder brother. P.s., *Ayeen-i- Akbari,* Part III , P. 335.

In the meantime the dead body is taken out into the corridor for the last ritual bath. In case it is a lady then the ladies of the house handle the job. A new piece of cloth is tied as an under wear to him/her before bathing which is thrown away after the bath. Till then the priest and the person completing the '*Kriya KarIm*' of the dead complete the last rites of the dead. The dead body is bathed with the ritual water known as the '*Anti Snan/ Shra:n*'. It comprises the sanctified water used for the 'last bath' while the priest makes recitations from the Holy Scriptures. After the bath the second new piece of cloth is used as the fresh under-wear of the dead. Then the nine outlets of the body, known as '*Nava dwar/da:r*' of a human bods are closed with small round pieces of incense. The nine doors of the body thus closed are : - 1. Mouth, 2. Two eyes, 3. Two nostrils, 4. Two ears, and 5. Rectal and urinary outlets.

The priest writes the reverse "*Ga:yitri Mantra*' on the cloth meant to cover the head of the dead provided it is a male body. First of all the cloth, '*Ram Ram PaTh*' bearing the letters '*Ram-Ram*' is put on the dead so that the marked portion remains confined up to the chest of the dead. The inner long gown stitched on its two sides with two arms attached to it follows it. In case of a male, the old *Yagnyopavita* worn by the dead previously is taken out and a new one is put on him from the side of his feet and then kept in the left arm and the neck of the dead. The '*Anath*' of the dead is changed with a fresh one made of '*NA:rivan*', in case however, the dead wore it when alive. It is followed with the '*Pawitra*', (the '*Kusha: grass-ring*') which is put in his/her third finger. The slippers are covered from inside with cotton and put left one on the right foot and the right one on the left foot after rubbing a little honey to the feet-soles of the dead. Vermilion/ saffron mark is made next on the forehead of the dead and it is covered with the head mask. Here *NA:rivan* is tied to his right wrist if it is a male body and

to the left one in case of a female. When all these formalities are complete, the body is put on the bier and the people start decorating it with flowers[1]. The things required to complete a few rites and formalities at the cremation ground, are put in a basket and the members of the family and others make arrangements for the dead body to be taken to the cremation ground. Three balls of barley flour (four in case the death has occurred during the days of '*Panchak*' commonly called, '*Drathl Pantsuk*'), are made and offered to various deities called the '*Shumshana Bhairav*' at different intervals/places, during the course of last journey of the dead to the cremation ground.

Meanwhile the bier is properly decorated with silver paper coated potatoes, flowers and *NA:rivan.* The potatoes are fixed at its sides. The upper portion of the bier is filled with mulberry braches arranged in a curved shape to make ribs of a canopy over it. The dead body is covered with the shroud dyed in saffron water. A shawl is thrown over the ribs of the bier so that it appears a decorated palanquin. All this decoration is done if the dead is an aged one otherwise not. The bier is commonly called the '*Arthi:*' and the decorated one for an aged person is called, '*Viman*' or 'V*ye'ma:n*'. All the relatives, friends and neighbours pay their reverence to the departed soul by performing the '*a:rthi:*'. After finishing the '*a:rthi*' the elder/ son of the dead one is asked to place a lump of barley flour '*Pind*' or 'P*yanD*', at the right side of the head of the dead and after girding his loins with a piece of cloth or a towel, he lifts the right corner of the

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[1] In earlier times a carpenter was called to prepare a fresh bier for the dead. The bier thus prepared, was put to the flames along with the dead body. This system was very costly due to the high cost of timber. But now not only the bier but also the board of wood used for bathing the dead, is kept in various temples and societies in big cities and towns. No doubt the old system is still continuing in the far-flung villages where the people consider that the bier once used becomes impure and cannot be made use of again for a pious thing like carrying or bathing a dead body.

bier on his shoulder to give a start to the last journey of the dead. After just initiating the process he is replaced and given a pot containing sanctified water to spray it over the path on which the dead is taken to the cremation ground. The younger son or grandson of the dead or a close relative lifts the bier in his place. The person performing the last rites, '*Kriya KarIm*' and some of the close relatives of the dead, take the pot containing the Holy Fire and other items in a basket. These are required for the rites to be performed at the cremation ground. In this way the procession of mourners starts for the cremation ground also known as '*Ra:zIbal*'. One of the younger ladies showers raw ground nuts toffees, sweetmeats and some small coins on the bier while it is lifted from the courtyard for the cremation ground.

2. *DA:H SANSKAR* - Cremation.

Cremation of the dead comes under the list of '*Sanskars*'. The other exercises connected with the death of a person can be categorised as 'rituals' while as the cremation has clearly been described as ' *Da:h Sanskar*' in our scriptures [1]. However, the cremation is not advised in case the dead is an infant and has not cut its teeth yet[1]. All others are advised cremation. No doubt holding of certain rituals after the date of the cremation differ according to the age of the dead. The person performing the rituals of the dead is asked to gird his loins with a towel or with a piece of cloth. A clean towel is also put on his shoulders and he lifts the pot containing the Holy Fire on his shoulder and another son or any close relative takes the pot of water and sprays from it while the procession

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[1] Burial is advised for such infants. P. S. *Vijayshwar Panchang*, Ed. O.N. Shastri, No: 380 P., 119

proceeds towards the cremation ground also called the '*A:vIre'ni'*. All other accessories are placed in a basket and taken along with for the completion of a few rituals at the cremation ground. The procession of mourners reaches the destination while chanting '*mantras*' from the Holy Scriptures. Now some societies connected with a few cremation grounds; provide transportation facilities for the dead and the mourners up to the cremation ground on usual transportation charges.

On the raised platform, called the '*ThakI PyAnD*' or 'the Last Resting Platform', built just near the cremation ground, the dead is kept for a while on it and the person performing the last rites is asked to have a last look of the dead known as '*Anti Darshan*', or '*Siryi Darshun*', i.e., to show the sun to the dead for the last time. Here the second lump of barley flour is placed on the bier on the right side of the dead. The dead is carried near the place where the pyre is to be raised for the dead [1]. The place of the pyre is cleaned with water and clay properly. With the help of either barley flour or thread, the priest makes a rectangular shaped figure on the besmeared place. It is known as '*Indra Ja:l/Za:*l' or '*tsita-va:s.*' It is a big rectangular shaped figure made with the help of thread or rice/barley flour. It is further divided into five smaller rectangles of the same width, all with a cross-marked diagonals made within the bigger rectangle. These are known as '*Pancha Maha Pra:n*', namely, 1. *Pra:n*,. 2. *Apa:n*, 3. *Vya:n*, 4. *Dhya:n*, and 5. *Maha: Pra:n*. The left over soaked barley flour and cooked rice and vegetables are kept at different corners and crosses of the said '*Indra Za:l*'. The priest performs certain rituals after making offerings to the Holy Fire brought all the way from the residence. The third lump of barley flour is kept on the bier. The

[1] In the villages the people and the relatives accompanying the dead prepare the pyre. But in big cities and towns, the societies have employed men for performing this duty. The man who prepares the pyre for the dead is called '*Ka:vuj*'.

remaining soaked barley is kept under the pyre along with a part of the cooked rice and vegetables, etc.The logs of wood are kept on it and the pyre is completed. The dead body is taken out from the bier and placed gently on the pyre. The bier is returned to the representative of the society from where it was brought. The person who makes the pyre removes the Shawl of the dead before it is laid on the pyre. Faggots wrapped with cotton and soaked in ghee are lit with the help of the Holy Fire that was lit earlier for completing the last rites of the dead. The man performing the last rites of the dead is asked to light the pyre starting from the head side of the dead. The other members of the family follow. As soon as the fire encircles the whole pyre, the person performing the last rites, is asked to take the earthen pitcher full of water sanctified by the priest on his shoulder and he is directed to spray a little water from it on the way while circumambulating the byre three times and then he is asked to strike the pitcher against the axe/stone kept at the head side of the pyre so that the pitcher breaks into pieces. It is held that by doing so the person severe his worldly relations/affection with the dead and vice versa. The remaining cooked rice and vegetables are kept at a solitary corner for the '*Shumshan Bhgairava'*. People accompanying the dead body also make a round of the pyre and leave for the bathing place where all the persons take a bath [1] and all offer water to the dead along with a little seasmum, known as '*Tilu:dhak'*. They again return to the place of the pyre for the last look if every thing goes as desired. Here all make a circumambulation of the pyre three time and every time a piece of fire-wood is thrown into the pyre by each person and they are now ready to return to their homes. A small heap of grass is burnt outside the cremation ground, preferably on the roadside,

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[1] According to the *Atharva Veda* (10-11-23) all those persons who accompany the dead body have the '*Ashouch*', a kind of mourning impurity till they take a bath and circumambulate the fire three times lit outside the cremation ground on their back home journey.

and all the people go round it three times and then leave for their respective homes. This process is called *'Tsha:y Za:lIni'*. In this way, it is presumed that the '*Ashouch*' or impurity of all the persons out side the '*Gotra*' of the dead person is removed. A few people accompany the person performing the last rites of the dead, up to his residence while others lave for their homes from here.

In the meantime the ladies of the house clean the corridor, where the dead had been bathed. The earthen lamp lit for the dead earlier, is placed in the corridor near the place where the dead was given the last bath. The lamp is covered by a wicker basket lest it should extinguish. The person performing the rituals is asked to enter the house and look under the lamp [1]. He then puts off the lamp and proceeds towards the inner room where the dead had breathed his/her last The persons accompanying the man performing the last rites line up outside the house at the main gate till his return from inside the house. A knitting needle called, *'Salai'* is kept on the main door on a small pestle-stone and the man removes it to one side and re-enters the house. Till then the daughters of the family/house prepare some tea etc. for all and it is after returning from the cremation ground that the members of the family including the householders and the relatives etc., can take any tea or breakfast as the case may be. The married ladies of the house including daughters-in-law are not allowed to prepare or cook any kind of food or tea on account of their impurity, *Ashouch* called the, *'Mritak'* that is observed for the first ten days from the date of the death of a person in a family. The daughters of the house/family (both married and un-married) do all the kitchen work for the first ten days, as

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[1] The purpose of looking under the lamp is to look for the signs, if any, cast near the lampshade. It is believed that the figure made under the shade of the lamp is to be the future incarnation of the dead.

they are considered free from this impurity. In case there is no such availability in the family, the relatives and the neighbours come to their help. All those who take any kind of cooked food that is prepared by a lady having such an impurity, get this '*Ashouch*' for a period of ten days from the date of taking such food or a drink.

During the medieval times there were professionals for singing the death songs or dirges just like the '*VanIvun*', which we have on the occasions of marriages etc. These songs are called 'V*a:n*' and the professionals, generally ladies, where known as, 'V*a:nIre'ni'*. The place where they sang the dirges on the death of a person was called '*Wadan Va:n'*. They were considered as important on the death of a person as are considered the ladies who perform the '*VanIvun'* at a marriage ceremony [1] The singing of 'V*a:ns'* or dirges on the death of a person was prevalent in almost all the civilizations of the world in one way or the other [2]. The early man must have felt sad at the demise of his/her parents. He and his family must have lamented and wept on such occasions but with the passage of time, the feudalistic order developed and the affluent families entrusted this task of weeping and waning to the professionals to make the occasion more showy. In the long run it developed into a custom and a means of living for some families. This custom has disappeared from our society now in such a manner that there are neither any such 'V*a:nIreni'* in our society nor does any one require the services of such persons on the death of his near and dear ones.

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[1] Solomon, Y. N., Russian Folk Lore, Trans. By Smith Macmillan and Co., New York, 1965. P 225

[2] Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Ed. By J. Hastings, (4th .Imp.) New York, vol., IV. P. 416

Presently, the place/house where the mourning is held, is known as '*Maran Va:n.*' The word '*Va:n*' means a shop or a place for holding a certain function and '*Maran*' means, 'death.' The practice of assembling of near and dear relatives, friends and neighbours on such occasions has been in vogue in almost all the civilizations of the world.

There are a number of references in the *Rgveda* where the journey of a soul on its way to the heavenly abode has been described in detail. These references tell how '*Yaṃa*', the god of Death allows a pious soul to take rest at a solitary and a beautiful place[1]. There are a number of references in the '*Paraskara Grahisutra*' that tell us how to lessen the sorrow of the family that has lost a close kin by talking about the qualities of the departed one [2]. All this was a means to divert the attention of the members of the bereaved family from the human loss suffered by it.

There are similar references of wailing and lamenting in the great Epics like the "*Mahabharata*' and the '*Ramayana*[3]. *Kalidasa* has given a vivid description of the lamentation of '*Rati*', the spouse of "*Kama Deva*', on her husband's death at the hands of '*Shiva*' [4]. While lamenting on the death of *Kama Deva, Rati* narrates the qualities, which he possessed. *Bhana Bhatta*, the great Sanskrit dramatist has narrated in his famous composition, 'H*arsha Charita*' that *Harsha's* sister *Rajshree* sang the '*Ruditaka*' song on the death of her husband [5]. There is a reference to the expression of grief in the Love Lyrics of the medieval times [6] Abul Fazal has narrated in *Ayeen-i-Akbari* that there was the precedence of recitation from the

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[1] Rgveda, (a) 10. 14. 9. and (b)17. 14. 7.

[2] Panday, Raj Bali, *Hindu Sanskar*, Varanasi, 1960, P. 323

[3] Upadhyaya, Krishen Dev, *Lok Sahitya Ki Bhoomika*, p. 571

[4] Raghuvamsha by Kalidasa, 8. 67.

[5] Upadhyaya, Krishen Deva, *Loka Sahitya Ki Bhoomika*, P. 581

[6] Roopenrda 'Bramer'. *Hindi Sahitya Main Bhakti Tatva*, Illahabad, 1965, P. 219

Holy Scriptures, narration of stories containing heroic deeds of our ancestors during the days of mourning on the demise of a person in a family [1]

The lamentation depends on the customs of a particular caste or creed and the age factor of the deceased. If the deceased is a young person, the less will be the *'show'* though the religious rites and rituals are of the same order for one and all as there is not any caste difference among the Klashmiri Pandits. In case the dead is of an advanced age, a special kind of wailing known as '*Ba:kh*' is arranged. The children (both, sons and daughters) of the deceased rise up early in the morning next day, when it is still dark and utter the following dirges in case the dead is their mother: -

Do>n dohan hInzi gari dramItshi MA:ji:,
Bo>chi ma: lAji: MA:ji:,
Tre'sh ma: lIji: MA:ji:,
So>rgas manz ja:y A:sinay MA:ji:

Translation:

Oh; mother you have left the house two days ago.
Don't you feel any hunger, Oh Mother?
Don't you feel any thirst, Oh Mother?
Let you be in the Heavens, Oh Mother.

The word, '*Babo*' meaning 'fatherly,' is used instead of '*MA:ji:*', 'mother', in case the deceased is an elderly male person or father, and the reference to the number of days in the dirges is increased as the days pass.In addition, recitation from scriptures is arranged in the evening on all the ten days of mourning in which, all the members of the family, close relatives and neighbours take part. Some very religious minded families arrange the '*Do>hI Krayi*'- day-to-day rituals for the smooth heavenly journey of the deceased. In this case the person performing this daily ritual, has to prepare food in a small and freshly

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[1] *Ayeen –i-Akbri* by Abul Fazal, Trans. By Sarkar and Jarrett (Supdt. Govt. Printing , Calcutta)1948, Vol. III. P. 354

cleaned pot, using fresh water. It is cooked in a separate corner of a room, well besmeared with clay and water and on a separate stove not used in the general kitchen. The person has himself to remain very pure in body and mind during all the days of these rituals. Besides, there should not be any gap in the continuity of this ritual. The rice thus cooked is to be spread on a plate so that the birds eat it early in the morning. In this way it is believed that the food thus served reaches the deceased directly and his/her appetite is subsided. Some people continue this ritual up to the six-monthly *Shra:dha* of the deceased while others continue to do so even for the whole year. The person performing these rituals has to keep an earthen lamp burning for the first ten days during which period it should not get extinguished for any reasons. Its extinction is considered to be a bad omen for the whole family and it is believed that in that case another member of the family might pass away very soon.

The custom of weeping and wailing has been in practice in the valley of Kashmir from the very ancient times. [1] Two types of expressions are commonly found in these lamentations. The qualities of the deceased are counted and the difficulties that the family may face in his absence are listed in the said wailings. The wailing may contain that the deceased was a pious, honest, truth loving and a straightforward man. Thus the deceased is given a very high status of '*Brahma*' and other great *Rishis*. Only the virtues of the deceased are highlighted and no mention of any acts of his/her sinful life is made. No doubt such a practice is prevalent in some of the parts of the world as we see in the dirges of Scotland [2]. An example of our dirges is given under: -

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[1] Lawrence, Walter R., The Valley of Kashmir, London, 1894) P. 262.

[2] (a) Upadhyaya, Krishen Dev, *Lok Sahitya Ki Bhoomika*, P. 62. (b) Solov, Y.M., *Russian Folk Lore*, Trans. By Smith Macmillan and Co.,) New York. 1956, P. 229.

Yi: tse‘ vontho ti: a:m jama:h,
Brahma [1] *juvIni’ Ka:ko, TApi:sho>r Ka:ko*
Mani:shwor Ka:ko, Yu:gi:shwor Ka:ko,
Ahanbi: Po>z Chakh vana:n tai.

Translation:

It happened so as you said it, Oh! Father of *Brahma Ji* (here the name of the younger brother or the son),
Oh! Elderly person, you did much penance,
Oh! You were chief among the ascetics,
Oh! You, were a person of real piety,
Oh! You are telling the truth, (asserts the elderly lady),
Oh! Chief of the ladies you are telling the truth. The daughters and the daughters-in-law sing all virtues of the deceased that he may never have had. Some of the lines for one of the deceased who had been idling all through his life are quoted as under: -

Ka:k gov Barzul ba:gandar
No>shi ko<ri anyan kya:h so>ndar,
Lari ja:yhi lazan kya:h so>ndar,
Vi:da pArinay kya:h so>ndar,
Waqta:h guzornay kya:h so>ndar
Yu:ga:h so>runay kyah so>ndar,
Ahanbi: po>z chakh vana: tai.

Translation:

Ka:kh, the elderly person, went into the garden situated at *Barzula*
He got constructed houses and dwellings so beautiful;
He brought daughters and daughters-in-law so beautiful,
How beautifully he recited from the *Vedas*?
How handsomely he spent all his time?
How majestically he practiced the ascetics?
Yes, you are telling the truth (comes the reply).

There are some instances where the others refute such baseless virtues of the deceased. There is a description about a peasant who had been idling all his

[1] Here the name of the younger brother or of the son is also included.

life and the dirges on his death goes as under: -

Da:nd wa:ynas lagIyo Ka:ko,
Nye'ndI karnas lagIyo Ka:ko,
Ahanbi swa A:sIs shu:bIy

Translation:

Oh! father, how dedicatedly you ploughed the land?
Oh! respected one, how intently you weeded the land?
(The other lady mocks}
Yes, yes, he had all these qualities, (he had none).

There are other types of wailings, which move the hearts of the listeners. These are philosophical in nature and carry more meaning than the words are supposed to imply. A few examples are as under: -

Dam dith ko>rtham damIkuy shabdah,
Bram dith tsalimIti Ka:ko,
Path kun kharIchmIti bronh kun trA:vimIti,
Bram dith tsalimati Ka:ko.

Translation:

Resting for a while you made a permanent resting sound for ever,
Oh father; you left, keeping all of us in confusion.
What you had, you have already spent and what you have left is for us to spend?
Oh elder one; you left all of us in a dilemma.

It may be recalled that the people of Kashmir have a belief that the dead must bless all including the members of the family and even the people who live in the neighbour-hood. The living people respect the dead lest it should put a curse on the house inmates including those in the neighbour-hood. It is because of this very fact that when the dead body is taken out for cremation the mourners recite: -

Babas mAngiv A:hiya Ahlas mAhlas A:hiya,
Yath mAjilisi tI sa:ri'nIy pu:shin A:hi:ya.

Translation:

Make a submission to the father to bestow on all of us, his blessings,

The whole neighbour-hood and the surroundings should have his blessings.
This gathering and alı of us should have ever lasting blessings from him.

In this way the mourning of the first day comes to an end. The youngsters put the house in order and the rooms are kept open and clean so as to receive the mourners and other relatives who start pouring in from the next day when they hear or are informed about the sad demise.

3. AstrIkI Tulni - **Collection of the Ashes.**

On the third or fourth day of cremation, if it is an auspicious horary moment and day, the mortal remains of the dead are collected in a small pitcher. Though nearly all the bones are burnt in the fire but still some hard ones survive. One such is the atlas bone, called the *'Po>rush'*. This one and all the other left over pieces of the bones are collected carefully and the remaining ashes are collected in a bag to be immersed in a river after spraying all the ashes with milk. The place of cremation is cleanly besmeared and then again sprayed with milk. Dry fruit like almonds, sweetmeats, raw groundnuts, toffees and some coins are spread over it. Incense sticks are burnt at the place and obeisance is paid before leaving the place by showering flowers on it.

Our scriptures clearly direct that the mortal remains of a person should be immersed at a confluence of two or more rivers, known as *'Sangam'* or *'Prayag'*, within ten days of the cremation of a person. But in case it is not possible to do so within this period, these should be immersed in the waters of the *Ganga* within one year on an auspicious horary moment and day. Generally the people of Kashmir immersed the mortal remains of their ancestors at *Shadipur*, commonly knows as *'ShA:dipo<r'*,

a place about thirty km. away from *Srinagar* and at the confluence of the rivers *Jehlim* and *Sindh*. Its earliest name was '*Sha:radha: Puram*', and it has been a place of great pilgrimage from the times immemorial as is mentioned in the *Vitasta: Maha:tamya* and the *Nilamata Purana* [1]. Now due to the exodus of the Hindus from the valley, the people immerse the mortal remains of their dead in the local rivers out side the valley.

After leaving the cremation ground, the person carrying the mortal remains, proceeds to the place of immersion where a special '*Shra:dha*' ceremony for the dead is held and the mortal remains are immersed into the river. These rites are performed at the bank of a river or a lake. It may be pointed out that carrying of the mortal remains into the house is strictly forbidden after these are collected from the cremation ground. In case, however, it is not possible to perform this ritual on the scheduled date, a hole is made on the left side of the main gate-wall of the house, called '*A:riv*' and the box or the pot containing the remains of the dead is kept in that hole and then plastered so that it remains safe. On some future date, the container is taken out of the hole on an auspicious horary moment and day and the ritual is performed either at *Haridwar* or at a place of pilgrimage meant for the purpose and as contained in the scriptures. It may be pointed out that before the partition of the sub-continent the people of Kashmir used to immerse the remains of their fore-fathers in the '*GangIbal*' lake on their annual pilgrimage to the '*HarI MukuTa Ganga:*' on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of *Bhadrapada*, (August/Sept.), also known as '*Ganga Ashtami*'. A pilgrimage was held every year on this date before the partition of the country. It falls on the other side of the Line of Control and forms a part of present Pak Occupied Kashmir. Besides, *Haridwar*, the Kashmiri Pandits

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[1] *Rajatarangini*, by Kalahana, Trans. Stein, M.A.,1979, Vol. II Ps. 329-38.

immerse the mortal remains of their dead either at Akhnoor or at Purmandal in the Jammu Province after their exodus from the valley of Kashmir.

4. DAhim Do>h -
The Tenth Day Rites and Rituals.

On the tenth day of the death of a person, a ritual called, '*DAhim Do>h*' is performed necessarily at the bank of a river, stream or a pond. The scriptures stress the observance of this day for all young and old and for both men and women [1]. Our scriptures have named it as the '*Uddak Kriya*' meaning the 'water ritual' [2]. On this date all the required articles like, milk, curd, honey, fruits, barley flour, rice, sugar, sesame, cotton, oil, a number of earthen ware, a barber's towel, a glass tumbler, cheese, bedding, umbrella, a stick, some clothes of the dead for the '*Achari*'[3], a stove and a few utensils for cooking rice for making the balls of cooked rice, are taken to the river/pond bank. Two pieces of cloth, one red and the other white, a little wool, flowers and a small mulberry stick, is required while performing the rituals. The person performing the ritual, besides clean shaving his hair and the beard has to change his clothes and take a bath at the riverbank. As such, he should have a new set of clothes to change[4]. First of all the person performing the '*Kriya*' is asked to immerse the rice balls and offer water to the dead. Offering of the barley flour lumps follows it. This

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[1] P.S. *Vijayshwar Panchang*, Ed. Shastri, O.N. No: 380, P.119. However, this ritual is not held if the dead has not yet dropped its milk teeth.

[2] Bhat, Keshạv Handoo, *Karam Kanday*, Pratap Press, Srinagar, 1920, P. 49.

[3] It is the professional name for the person who receives all the articles of the dead after these are determined by the person performing the ritual. He also helps in performing some of the rituals here. He is commonly known as *'Pa:nyo>ch* in Kashmiri language.

[4] Till recently the in-laws brought such clothes for their sun-in-law for this change in case the person performing the ritual was married. This practice is no more in vogue now

ritual is performed with the help of the '*Achari/A:tsA:ri*'. Two earthen pots, one depicting the dead person and the other as the Messenger of Death, called '*YamI DI:t*' are filled with cooked rice, wet barley flour, all kinds of fruit, some pieces of radish , sesame, milk, curd, a little ghee, flowers and honey. Both the pots are then covered with a lid and with the white and red cloth and tied with a garland of flowers alongwith with a small mulberry stick called the, '*DanDam*'. Here the '*Achari*' is served a cup of hot milk and is given some gratification in cash. The person performing the ritual determines all the articles brought for the '*Achari*' by spraying a few drops of water while the priest makes certain recitations. The performer is next shaves his hair. After taking a bath the person lifts the pots covered with cloth one by one on his left shoulder and throw them on a stone on the bank of the river in such a way so that both the pots break into pieces and all their contents are washed away. Thus by doing so, it is presumed, that the dead severs all his connections with the material world. The person performing the '*Kriya*' takes a dip after both these rituals and wears a new set of clothes. The priest makes a saffron mark on his forehead and burns a few seeds of sesame in the fire kindled for the purpose.

It has been a general practice among the Kashmir Hindus that almost all the male relatives, friends, neighbours, show their presence at the river on this day whereas the ladies folk call at the residence of the mourners. After completing the ritual, all those who are present on the occasion, line up in two rows at the bank of the river. At the end of the row is kept an iron needle on a stone pestle. After walking between the two rows of the people, the person puts aside the needle with his left foot and proceeds towards his home followed by all those who are either very close relatives of the person or reside in his

neighbour-hood [1]. On reaching home the person enters the house up to the spot where the dead was put at the time of death and then again shows his presence at the gate. The neighbours retire to their homes whereas other members of the family and some near relatives enter into the house The last function to be performed on this day is the '*Nu:nI Shra:dh'* to be performed by an unmarried daughter/grand daughters of the deceased (either from the son's or daughter's side). In the scriptures it is called, '*Lavan Shra:dh*' [2] As the lumps on this occasion are made out of salt, which are offered to a cow after being duly determined by the priest,. Sweet rice-milk pudding, '*Khir*' is served to small children on this occasion .

5. KAhim Do>h -

Eleventh Day Rites and Rituals.

This is one of the most important rites on the death of a person in a family. The family members have already taken a bath and washed their clothes except the elderly ladies who continue with the observance of the mourning for some days more according to the ladies '*Dharma Shastra*:' which has no scriptural evidence or authority but the concurrence of the precedence and tradition. There are no such demarcations made by our Holy Scriptures and these contain equal codes of conduct for men and women mourners, both old and young.[3] The priest of the family attends the house early in the morning and serves a few drops of '*Panchagavya*' to all the members of the family excepting those who have neither taken a bath nor changed yet. The ladies of the house are happy on this day

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[1] Some people perform this rite at the residence of the person performing the rites, which is more desirable as for our scriptures are concerned.

[2] .Some people perform this rite at the riverbank, which is not desirable according to the scriptures.

[3] The scriptures contain that no eleventh or the twelfth day rites should be performed in case the dead (of what ever age he might be) is without being invested with Yagnyopavita. P. S. *Vijayshwar Panchang*, Ed. O.N. Shastri, No: 380 P., 119

because it is after more than ten days that they are allowed to look after their kitchen. It is believed that after taking the '*Panchagavya*' the impurity on account of the death, called the '*Mritak*' (*Maran Hontsh*} is cleared off.

On this date the '*Shra:dh*' ceremony of the deceased is performed collectively by the son/s. The married daughters of the dead also participate in the rituals, called '*KarIm Karun*'. As such they invite their own priest/s for the said purpose. The host invites some local '*Brahmins*' to participate in the function in addition to his own priest. The scriptures call it a collective rite known as, '*Ekodishti*', the '*Eleventh Shra:dh*' ceremony performed for the deceased. In reality, all the rituals for full one year are completed for the dead on this date as contained in the scriptures. The rituals performed after the expiry of the fortnights, monthlies and six-monthlies, etc., are just an extension of this rituals performed in respect of the dead on the eleventh day. The main rituals on the occasion are: -

1. *Kalshi Pu:za:* - Reverence to the gods,
2. *Pratima: Pu:za:* - Reverence to Lord Vishnu,
3. *Goav Da:n* - Venerating a cow, and
4. *Shra:dh* - Obeisance to the departed.

According to our Holy Scriptures the day of the heavens above, is equal to twelve days on this planet. On the eleventh day of the departed one, it is considered that he has reached close to the '*Vishnu Loka*', the abode of eternal peace. Hence the deity is adored in the form of a '*Pratima*', a small image of Lord *Vishnu*. Besides performing the '*Pind da:n*' and other rites, it is believed that the departed one has to cross a stream known as the '*Vaiterni Nadi*' The scriptures further contain that the departed one can cross the stream by catching the tail of a cow, because the tail of a cow is considered to be most pious[1]. Here the ritual is observed symbolically. The

[1] This narration is contained in the '*Shiv Purana*'.

invited priests and other guests are treated well on this ritual.

6. *BAhim Do>h -*
The Rites and Rituals of the twelfth day.

It is the concluding rite performed on the first fortnight of the death of a person. It is presumed that the soul of the departed meets his forefathers in Heavens on this day as he completes one full day of the upper worlds on this day. It is because of this very fact that the rite known as, '*PyenDI Millwan*' or '*Sapindi Karan*' i.e. the obsequious rite of uniting the dead with the manes is a part of the rituals held on this day. The person performing the ritual connects the departed soul with his ancestors by uniting the balls of cooked rice etc., as contained in the scriptures.

The dates and timings for performing certain other connected rites in respect of the departed one are decided on this date provided it is an auspicious day. These include: -

1. The recitations for the daily offering of water (*Pitri Rin*), known as '*Ko>mb Dyun*' [1]. The priest explains to the concerned person the performance and the *Mantra* to be recited along with the day and date of the lunar month for offering water and the other ingredients [2] to the departed one for one year.

2 Installation of wooden stand at an appropriate place on the outer wall of the house and accessible to the

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[1] It is a small toy pot made of copper used for offering water to the departed one. Offering of water with the pot, known as '*Ko>mb Dyun*' has a special significance according the scriptures. This ritual is performed by the kin on of the deceased for a period of one year before his breakfast and on the eve of the Anniversary of the dead, the pot is resolved.

[2] The other ingredients for offerings are a few seeds of seasmum and a straw of *Darbha*, known as '*Ve'shThur*'.

birds, for keeping food and other eatables in the name of the departed one for a period of at least one year.

3. A list of auspicious days for presuming various activities of daily routine in the house and outside as these were restrained during the days of mourning.

4 To make a list of the dates and the days for performing the fortnightlies, monthlies, six-monthly and the annual *Shra:dh* of the dead.

7. *Chalun* - Bathing and Washing

The younger people of the bereaved family take a bath and wash their clothes on an auspicious day on the fifth or the sixth day of mourning. These include younger daughters and the daughters-in-law of the family and their children as well. The elder male members of the family take a bath and change on the tenth day. The scriptures clearly indicate that the person/s who are to perform the '*Kriya: KarIm*', 'the religious rites' of the deceased including the daughters, should be neat and clean on the day of the '*Kriya*;' i.e. the tenth day. A person, who does not take a bath or change his/her dress till the tenth day, is not entitled to perform any ritual or religious rite on the proceeding day/s. The family members, other than those who perform the tenth day rites, are advised to do so on any auspicious day except on, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. But the old ladies of the house generally adhere to the old traditions and customs and prefer to remain away from any such rituals. On the thirteenth or fourteenth auspicious day they take a bath during the night and wash their clothes etc., before it is early morning. In case the deceased has died at a ripe age of eighty or more, a feasting is held on that day and the relatives and all neighbours are invited to take part in that feasting. The day being an auspicious one, the female members of the family step out of the house on this very

day so that they are at liberty to visit any place whenever the need arises on a future date. In this way all the rites that follow immediately after the death of a person come to an end, though the fortnightlies, monthlies, six-monthly and the yearly rituals continue on the specified dates, called '*Tithi*' according to the lunar calendar.

8. Pachhi Wa:rI - Fortnightly Rites.

Almost the whole of the first fortnight of the mourning passes with the final ritual '*Chalun*'. The first fortnightly ritual is held on completion of one month from the date of expiry on the same lunar date, '*Tithi*'. While deciding the date of the ritual the '*Madhyahn*' is kept in view. It is a pure Sanskrit word meaning 'meridian,' local 'noon time' or 'mid-day'. The calculations are made on the basis of the period of the sun staying for a particular day in a specific '*Nakshetra*', and the half of this period is called '*Madhyahn*'. If it falls past sunrise, the ritual is held on the same date and if it falls prior to that then it is held one day earlier. In each case a simple '*Shra:dh*', is performed either on the date of the '*Ththi*' or a day earlier, called '*Ma:swa:r*'. According to the scriptures the first such fortnightly is held at the expiry of one lunar month and such fortnightly performances also known as fortnightly *Shra:dhs* continue from this very date for a period of three months totaling five fortnightlies in total excluding the rituals held up to the first eleventh day of mourning. On the fifth such fortnightly, it is said that the fortnightly rituals have cumulated, '*Ma:swa:rI SamIni*'; and, from this date onwards, the rituals are held every month on the '*Tithi*' of the death. During all these occasions a rite in the form of a '*Shra:dh*' is held and fast is observed by all those who take part in these rites.

9. *Ma:swa:r* - Monthly Rites.

After the expiry of three months these rites are performed on month-to-month basis. The rites observed, are the same as are performed in respect of '*Pachiwa:rI'*. The *'Shra:dh'* is performed and fast held as usual by all those who take part in the *Shra:dh* rites on such occasions.

10. *ShaDmo<s* - Six Monthly Rites.

This consists of two rites, *'ShaDmo<s'*, six monthly and '*Ma:swa:r'*. In case the "*Ma:swa:r'*, comes a day earlier than the scheduled '*Tithi*' of the death, the Six monthly *'ShaDmo<s'* too is held a day earlier. One thing is to be kept in view that the 'S*haDmo<s*' is followed by the *'Ma:swa:r'*. On this date the rites for six months are held including all those monthly or fortnightly rites, which could not be performed due to one reason or the other on the schedule dates. It may be pointed out that the *'ShaDmo<s'* of a dead person cannot be completed in case there has been the birth of a baby in that family and whose '*Jatkarn/ Namkarn'* has not yet been performed till then. Besides, the six monthly rites can not be performed by the son/s, performing the '*Kriya*' of the deceased in case he/they have not been sanctified by performing his/their '*Yagnyopavita*' Sanakar. The *ShaDmo<s* rites in such cases is performed only after performing the '*Yagnyiopavita'* [1]. It may be recalled that though he/they or any of their representative may have completed the rites of the dead till then but this particular rite can not be performed unless the '*Yagnyopavita* is cast to the real

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[1] This type of *Yagnyopavita* ceremony is called, '*Wath PeTh Yoni*,' and is cast to complete the Shadmo<s and other rites of the departed one .It is held just to include the person/s performing the rites into the clan or *Gotra* and is held in a simple form without any celebrations or show.

successors. *'Shra:dh'* is performed and fasting is held on both the days of *ShaDmo<s* and *Ma:swa:r* that follow one another and while performing this ritual the married daughters and their priests also take part.

11. Ti:L - **Ritual of offering lamps.**

It is thought that there is a vacuum in the upper space where neither the light of the sun nor of the moon reach.[1]. In order to illuminate that portion of the path for the departed one, the rituals of offering lamps and oil is held prior to or immediately after '*ShaDmo<s*' so as to brighten and illuminate its path and to make his journey to the other worlds more smooth. There are instances of celebrating it along with the rites of the twelfth day or on one of the monthly rites provided it is an auspicious day of the week, preferably a Monday, a Wednesday or a Friday.

According to the scriptures this area of darkness is under the charge of a demon/virago called as '*Chandika*' and in order to please her she is served with bread and fried fish besides performing the usual *Shra: dh'* [2]. The people who are completely vegetarian prepares porridge of coarse.ground flour and pancakes of wheat flour as an offering to the '*Chandika.*' Last of all a red turnip is venerated and placed on these offerings. After completing the '*Shra:dh'* of the dead, the function comes to an end. It may be pointed out that till recently porridge and pancakes were distributed among relatives and the neighbours as an oblation. But due to the fact that the

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[1] Bhatt, .Keshav Handoo, *Karma Kandey*, Pratap Steem Press, Srinagar, 1920, P. 98.

[2] Jyotshi,.Pandit Keshav Bhat, Rainawari, Srinagar, *Karma Kandey*, Pt.II. 1933, P. 221.

oblation is connected with the sad incident of mourning, the practice stands discarded and is no more in vogue now.

12. WAharwA:r - Anniversary
Rituals and rites at the end of one year

After the expiry of one lunar year (twelve months of earth, which is considered as equal to one month of heavenly bodies,) the rite of '*WAharwA:r*' or '*Varshiki*', is held. As already discussed under the heading '*ShaDmo<s*', the '*Ma:swa:r*' of the diseased is held one day prior to the date of the '*WAharwA:r*'. The rituals on the date combine some of the rites performed on the 'Eleventh' and the 'Twelfth' day rites of the deceased put together. A collective '*Shra:dh*' is performed by the son/s and married daughter/s of the deceased. One who performs the rites connected with the departed one for the whole year and offers water to the dead with the small copper pot, called '*Kombl GaDI/GADvI*' resolves it to the priest with suitable gratifications. All the priests including those of the daughters who perform the "*KarIm*' of the diseased and the guests etc., invited on the occasion, are treated well and thus the rituals and rites, extended over a period of one year, from the date of the death of a person, come to an end.

13. Shra:dh -
The Death Anniversary.

The word, '*Shra:dh*' is derived from the Sanskrit word .'*Shra:dh*' – whatever is offered to the manes with devotion, is called '*Shra:dh*'.[1] On the expiry of one complete lunar year and after the completion of the

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[1] *Yagyavalkya Smriti*. By Maharshi Vyas, , p.s.*Vijyashwar Panchang*, Ed. by Shastri, O.N., year 5080, P.122.

'Anniversary', the '*Shra:dh'* of the dead is held on year to year basiś and on the fixed lunar date of the month. In case, however, the Lunar Mansion', '*Nakshetra*', of the said date shrinks for less than the 'Mid day', called '*Deva Dev'*, the ritual is held a day earlier. On this date all the members of the family assemble and keep a fast for the day and eat only after performing the '*Shra:dh'* of the deceased.

14. TirthI Shra:dh–
Rites at the Place of Pilgrimage

On completion of the annual rituals and rites, '*WAharwA:r*,' of the dead, the person performing such rites, looks for an auspicious day and feasibility of lunar mansions, so that he can perform the '*Shra:dh'* of the departed one at a place of pilgrimage meant for such rites, ćalled '*TirthI Shra:dh'*. It may be pointed out that the annual '*Shra:dh'* after performing the 'Anniversary ' of a dead is not advised to be performed in the residential house unless it is held at a place of pilgrimage. Among a number of places for performing such rites, the following pilgrimage spots invite a special mention :-

1. *Vijay Saftami'* held at *Martand Tirtha* or *Mattan,* in Anantnag district. It is a horal moment occurring on some selected Sundays falling on the seventh day of either bright or dark fortnights of the months of *Jeshtha* or *Ashada.*(second/third month of the *Vikram* era). Besides the other lunar feasibilities connected with this specific horal moment are also taken into consideration while pronouncing its occurrence.
2. *Ganga Ashtami'*, eighth day of the bright fortnight of *Bhadrapada* (the fifth month of *Vikram* era), held at GangIbal, Handwara, Kashmir.

3. *Shra:wanI Ba:h* , twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Sawan*,(the fourth month of the *Vikram* era) held at Shopian, district Pulwama, Kashmir.
4. *Surya Thirtha* at '*Zyawan*', Pampore, District, Pulwama, Kashmir, held on the eve of a solar eclipse.

In fact there are as many '*Tirthas*', places of pilgrimage for holding the '*TirthI Shra:dh*' of the manes, as is the number of springs and rivulets in Kashmir, for each is dedicated to one or the other god or goddess and a few among these are dedicated to the manes. This type of the ritual is also held at Hiridwar, Prayag, (Banaras), and Puruṁandal, Jammu.

15. Dwa:dashi: - Performance of Ba:h

The scriptures contain the performance of '*Dwa:dashi:*', as an act of holding of all the rites of meeting of the 'Mortals and the Manes'. The rites and ceremonies extended over a period of one year from the date of the death of a person up to his/her Anniversary are held in a single leap-year month, generally called 'the *Bhanumas*' in our scriptures that allow performing ones death rituals prior to the occurrence of the physical death during this period. Now that the twelve months of our planet, earth are considered as equal to twelve days of the Heavens, a man, who is desirous of completing all his death rites prior to his/her physical death, has to perform special rites and rituals according to the scriptures and he/she is advised to hold such rites at a '*Surya Tirtha*', preferably during the month of '*Bhanumas*', the additional solar month.

According to the *Martand Mahatmya*, *Aditi*, the wife of *Kashyap* gave birth to a life-less egg '*Mritand*' as her thirteenth child. It was due to the penance of *Kashyap* that 'Sun' was born out of this life-less egg,

'*Mritand* 'and made his abode at "*Martand*".[1] According to one more theory, there are twelve '*Suryas*' for the twelve zodiac signs and out of these the eighth one is named as '*Martand*'.[2] It is after every three lunar years that there is an addition of one lunar month to the calendar to synchronize it with the solar calendar and this additional month is known as '*Bhanumas*' or '*Adhik Mas*'. It is due to all these facts that the '*Surya Tirtjha*' at *Martand,* Kashmir, has been a place of great pilgrimage for such rites since ancient times. It may be pointed out that there are the following four famous *Surya* temples and prominent centers of pilgrimage in the sub-continent since ancient times :-

1. Multan, 2. Modhera, 3. Konark, and 4. Martand [3]

The performance of these rites involve an austerity and these include all the rites from death of a person up to the last and the final rite known as the '*Varshiki*'. These extend over a period of nearly one month of '*Bhanumas*' and include the following rites that could be performed for both the manes and the living.

1. The rites of the first thirteen days (including *Chalun),*
2. Five fortnightly rites {*Pachiwa:rI*),
3. Six monthly rites (*Ma:swa:rI),*
4. Six monthly (*ShaDmo<s*),
5. Offering of the oil/ lamps (*Ti:l),*
6. The Annual *Shra:dh,* and the final ritual of *Dwa:dashi,(Ba:h*)

The rites and rituals performed on the death of a person in a family, as discussed above, require the following items for performing such rites. These also include some items determined and donated to the

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1 Kalhana ,*Rajatarangini,* Trans. By M.A. Stein Vol. I year, 1979 V 92

2 *Rajatarangini* of Jonaraja,Trans. By Singh Dr.Raghunath,1972, p.533.

3 Bamzai, P.N. K., *History of Kashmir*, 1962, P. 199

deserved and for making oblation to the holy fire: -

1. Dry fruits like coconut, almonds, dates, sugar, Apricots, lotus seeds, (dry), Sugar candy, etc. 2. Incense, 3. Cotton, 4. Saffron 5. Camphor. 6. Walnuts, 7. All Spices, 8 Cloth 9. Rice, 10. Sleepers, 11. Fire pot, 12. Stick (in case of aged), 13. A piece of matting (*Dari*) 14. An Umbrella, 15. Salt, 16. All cereals, 17. Ghee, 18. Barley, 19. Thread, 20. Needle, 21. Knife, 22. mirror, 23. comb, 24 A shaving set (in case of a male) 25. Hair pins, bangles etc. (in case of a female) 26.A Plate (*Tha:l*), Tumbler, pot and a bowl./cup 28. Sesame, 29. Fruits, 30. All vegetable, 31. Oil/lamp, or a torch, 31. Milk, curd, 32 Firewood. 33. Flour of Rice, Barley and Chest-nuts. 34. Flowers 35. *Ganga: Jal.*, and fire-wood for *'Hawan'* etc.

16. Da:n PratishTha: -

The Items for Donation/resolving.

Our scriptures give a list of articles which are to be determined to the deserving from time to time on various occasions of the rites and rituals held on the death of a person [1]. A list of such articles to be resolved on such occasions is given as under: -

1. On the. 10th, 11th, and 12th days *Shra:dh.*	Salt, Bucket or a pitcher Full of water, utensils,
2. First Month's. ,,	Food grains.
3. Third Fortnightly ,,	Cloth.
4. Second month's ,,	Perfumes, etc.
5. Fifth fortnightly ,,	An Umbrella.
6 *Ma:swa:r* of 3rd month,	Wheat flour and other eatables.
7. *Ma:swa:r*of fourth month, ,,	Salt.
8. ,, Fifth ,, ,,	Gov Da:n.

[1] Jyotshi, Pandit Keshav Bhatt, *Karam Kanndi,* Vol, II, 1933, P. 294 - 301.

9.	Six-monthly *(ShaDmo<s)*			Utensils, a metal boat made of gold or silver and an umbrella.
10.	*Ma:swar*	of Sixth	month,	Cereals.
11.	,,	Seventh.	,,	Sugar, Vegetables,
12.	;;	Eighth	,,	Kitchen utensils
13.	,,	Ninth	,,	A bed-sheet.
14.	,,	Tenth	,,	A fire-pot.
15.	,,	Eleventh	,,	A golden parasol.
16.	,,	Twelfth	,,	A fan
17.	Ti:l	--		Four, Grains, Rice, Oil, Table Lamp Woolens, etc.
18.	Anniversary (*WAharwA*r)		,,	Utensils, cloth, grains, etc.
19	*TirthI Shra:d*		,,	Curd, rice and cloth ,etc.

(*Including additional lunar month, known as *Masadhik* or *Bhanuma:s,* making the total monthly rites, etc, for one year to seventeen excluding '*Ti:l*' and the Anniversary.)

Chapter Eleven

Auspicious days of the year.

The lunar calendar comprises of 360 days and various checks, additions and alterations are made in it from time to time so as to adjust it with the solar calendar or the *Vikram* era, as it is generally called. It further coincides with the English calendar with the result that the first *Baisakh* falls generally on the 13th /14th of April every year. The first five months, from *Vaishakha* to *Bhadrapada,* are counted at 31 days each and the remaining seven months from *Ashvin* to *Chaitra* are calculated at 30 days each. The twelve months of the year are named as under: -

	Name		
S.No.	Kashmiri	Sanskrit	Bikarmi
1.	*Vahyakh*	*(Vaishakha)*	*Baisakh.*
2.	*Ze'Th*	*(Je'shta)*	*Jayth*
3.	*Ha:r*	*(Ashada)*	*Ashad*
4.	*Shra:vun*	*(Shravana)*	*Savan*
5.	*BA:dIri'pyeth*	*(Bhadra)*	*Bhadun*
6.	*A:shid*	*(Ashwayuj)*	*Asuj*
7.	*Ka:rtik*	*(Ka:rtik)*	*Kattak.*
8.	*MAnjhor*	*(Margashirish)*	*Maghar*
9.	*Po>h*	*(Paush)*	*Poh.*
10.	*Ma:g*	*(Magh)*	*Magh.*
11.	*Pha:gun*	*(Phalgun)*	*Phagan.*
12.	*TsithIr*	*(Chaitr)*	*Chait.*

There are two fortnights in each month. The bright fortnight is called *'Zu:nIpach'* and the dark one is called *'GaTIpach'*. The fifteen days of a fortnight are named as under: -

Kasshmiri	*Sanskrit*
1. *O>kdoh.*	*Pratipadya*
2. *Do>y'.*	*Detiya*
3. *Tray.*	*Tritiya*
4. *Tso<ram*	*Chaturthi*

5. *PA:ntsam.* *Panchami*
6. *Shayam* *Shyeshti*
7. *Satam* *Saftami*
8. *A:Tham* *Ashtami*
9. *Navam.* *Navmi*
10. *DAham.* *Dashmi*
11. *Ka:h.* *Ekadashi*
12. *Ba:h* *Dwadashi*
13. *Truwa:h.* *Trayodashi*
14. *Tso>da:h.* *Chaturdashi*
15. *Punim, (*Bright Fortnight , *Purnamashi or Purnima* or *Ma:was (*Dark fortnight).*Amawasya.*

In each month there are certain auspicious days either during the bright or the dark fortnight. Besides this, there is a considerable number of auspicious days which are extended over a period of complete one year. All these days are attributed to various deities and gods. For example, the following days of each of the bright /dark fortnights are considered as most auspicious and sacred: -

1 *A:Tham (Ashtami)*,Eighth day of a bright fortnight.
2 *Ka:h (Ekadashi),* Eleventh ,, ,, ,,
3 *Punim. (Purnamashi)* .Fifteenth ,, .,,
4. *Ma:vas (Amavasya)* Fifteenth ,, ,, dark fortnight.
5. *SA:nkra:th (Sankranti)* The first date of a solar month

The eighth day of a bright fortnight is attributed to Mother Goddess whereas the eleventh and the fifteenth days of a bright fortnight are consecrated to god *Vishnu.* The fifteenth dark fortnight is attributed to Lord *Shiva*. On all these days some of the people keep fast and go to various temples and holy places of pilgrimage. People prepare sweetmeats and puddings and offer them to the deities. They also offer it to the deserving and the needy including their friends and family members. The fifteenth day of a dark fortnight, consecrated to Lord *Shiva*, is considered to become extremely sacred if it falls on a Monday, commonly called '*Sumri: Ma:vas*'. People of Srinagar city visit *Su:my:ar* temple, situated on the banks

of the river Jehlim at Habbakadal, Srinagar and after taking a dip in the river *Vitasta*, prayer is held at the temple. Some people now visit Haridwar or Purmandal (40 km from Jammu) and take a dip in the holy *Ganga/Devaka* Rivers. *Sankranti* is consecrated to the worship of Sun god. On this day people keep a fast and eat sweetened bread and avoid taking salt. On all such occasions, people worship '*Parthishowara*[1] and make 'sweet pancakes', called '*Sati Di:v* [2]'. During all these auspicious days the house is cleaned and every care is taken to remain total vegetarian. The other favourite dishes prepared on these occasions are yellow rice known as '*TAhAr*', rice-pudding, known as '*Khi:r*', coarse grain pudding , '*HAlvI*', etc. After oblation these are offered to the deities and to birds etc., and what remains is distributed among the close neighbours, relatives and other members of the family.

In addition to the above mentioned auspicious days celebrated every month, there are a number of days throughout the year that are attributed to a number of gods, goddesses, deities and places of pilgrimage. A short list of such auspicious days celebrated in different ways by the Kashmiri Pandits residing in different parts of the country after their mass exodus from the valley of Kashmir in general and the left over Pandits of the valley in particular who celebrate such festivities, is discussed in the coming folios of this book. However, these accounts do not include the auspicious days of national importance celebrated by the people of all races, creeds and religions of this sub-continent, collectively.

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[1] A Shiva Lingam of clay specially dug from a holy place and coated with mercury, is made on such occasions. It is worshipped on such auspicious occasions and days of the year. The '*Lingam*' thus made, called, '*Parthishowara*', is immersed in the evening after venerating it.

[2] Sweet fried pancakes commonly known as '*Pu:ri*' are made and distributed among the neighbours and friends after oblation.

1. Navreh - New Year's Day

It is celebrated on the first of the bright fortnight of *Chaitr* (the twelfth month of the *Vikram* era). It is also known as the 'First *Navaratra*' and is celebrated throughout the Indian sub-continent in one-way or the other. Early in morning children are anxious to show the '*Tha:l*' to all the members of the family and get the coin or money placed on the '*Tha:l*' that among other things, contains rice, walnuts,(as many as the number of the family members), a morsel of cooked rice, curd, milk, mirror, pen, the new calendar (Almanac), called '*NechipAtIr*', a portrait of Mother goddess '*Kru:lI Pach*' some almond-blossoms or flowers, some blades of fresh grass and a coin. The process of all this assemblage, called '*Tha:l Barun*,' is completed late at previous night and the ritual to see it in the morning on the New Year's Day. '*Navreh*,' is called, '*Buth Wuchun*'. The sight of this 'Tha:l', containing all these items, is considered as an auspicious omen on this occasion because the '*Saftarshi*', calendar of Kashmir starts from the first day of the bright half of '*Chaitr*'. It may be pointed out that due to the change in times, children now do not get satisfied with a coin or two so the parents have to put convincing amount of money on it. Besides, if marriage of a son has taken place in the family during the preceding year, it is considered as the right of the new bride to show the '*Tha:l*' to all the members of the family and thus receive cash money or any other gratifications from her father-in-law who gives it to the bride after she shows the '*Tha:*l' to theeach member in the family. Yellow salt-rice is prepared out of the rice placed in the '*Tha:l*' and the walnuts are given one each to the members of the family who throw them into the stream or the pond before taking a bath there.

The continuous cold and snowfall during winter makes a period of three months' life monotonous for all the people of the valley, and they come out of their houses and arrange an outing on this day. With a change in the season all, young and old, wear new clothes. The young and the children celebrate the day by arranging an outing whereas the elders start arrangements for decorating their '*Pu:ja*'-rooms to welcome Mother Goddess '*Durga*:' on the eve of First *Navaratra*. The word meaning of '*Navaratra*' is '*Nine Nights*' Goddess *Durga* attained nine forms during these nine nights beginning from the first *Navaratra* from the first of the bright half of *Chaitr*. These are: -

1. *Shail Putr*i, 2. *Brahamacharn*i, 3. *Chandraghanta*, 3. *Kushmanda*, 5. *Skanda Mata*, 6. *Kantyayin*i, 7. *Kala Ratra*, 8. *Maha Gauri*, and 9. *Siddhi Datri*.[1]

The devotees keep fast on all the nine days and sow some barley seeds in a pot and sprinkle it with water and milk while worshipping it everyday. It starts sprouting on the third or fourth day of sowing and gives a good look on the eighth/ninth day known as '*Durga: AsTam*i' and "*Rama Navmi*' respectively. In this way there is a busy schedule for all the members of the family, young and old, on *Navareh* actually extending over a period of ten days.

2. *ZangI Tray* - The Third Auspicious Day.

It is a day meant exclusively for the women folk and is celebrated on the third day of the bright half of the month of *Chaitr*. On this day the married ladies, all the old and the young including the brides, visit their parents' house early in the morning and stay with them for the whole day. They consider it a good omen to visit their parents on this date and spend it there in feasting. In the

[1] *Vijiyashwar Panchang*, Ed. Shastri. P. N., No:317, year. 2001-02. P. 71.

after-noon they return to their home with a packet of salt, '*ATIho>r*' and some cash, known as '*Atl Gath*'. In some families the mother-in-law or the elder sister-in-law known as '*DIrka:kani*' or '*Ze"Thani:*' arrange an outing for the newly married brides and in this way all the gardens and the '*Ba:da:m Wa:ri:*' [1] in the vicinity of Srinagar city, are generally full of visitors on this date. It is on the whole a busy and joyful day for the ladies of all age groups.

3. Durga Ashtami -
The Day consecrated to Goddess Durga.

According to the scriptures the bright eighth day of *Chaitr* it is held as the birthday of goddess *Durgha* and it is celebrated as '*Durga Ashtami*' in the length and breadth of the country. People go to various temples and arrange special prayers and '*Hawans*' in their homes and temples. The biggest congregations are held at *Durga Nag*, '*Po>kharibal*' [2] Srinagar, situated to the south of the foot hills of *Shankaracharya* and to the east of the '*Parbath*' hillocks, respectively. All the people keep a fast on this day and spend it in deep penance. In the evening people immerse the pots containing the barley sprouts into the water and in this way the eight-day celebrations come to an end. Some people, however, make such immersions on the ninth day.

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[1] A place full of almond trees in the vicinity of '*Hari Parbath*' or '*Sharika Pi:tha*', was called '*Ba:da:m WA:r*. All these trees have been felled for making available land for the housing colonies. Hence only sweet memories are left.

[2] It is a small spring temple in the vicinity of Srinagar city to the east of '*Hari Parbath*' hillock. It is considered as the abode of Mother Goddess '*Ragnya:*'. A big congregation is held here on the eve of *Hora Ashtami*', the eighth day of the dark fortnight of '*Phalguna*' also.

4. Ra:mI Navam - The Birth Day of Lord Rama.

The ninth day of the bright fortnight of *Chaitr* also called as *'Rama Navmi',or 'RamI Navam',* is celebrated as the birthday of Lord *Rama*. On this day the people of the city and its suburbs go to the temple of *Rama* situated at Sathu, Barbar Shah, Srinagar, called, '*Ra:mI tsAndrun*'. This day is also celebrated at Brari Angan, in the Anantnag district. A similar congregation is also held at the temple of *Shaiva Bhagwati*: at Akingam, district, Anantnag, Kashmir. In Jammu the devotees visit *Shri Raghunath Mandir*. A large number of people go to Bahu Fort and pay their reverence to goddess *Durga* at the fort temple. A considerable number of Kashmiri Pandits visit "*Uma Devi*' temple situated at lower Roop Nagar, Jammu and a big *Hawan* is held here in which a good number of people participate. This day is also celebrated as *Shail Putri Jayanti* held at Baramula, Kashmir.

5. VaishA:ki: (Baisakhi) - The first Baisakh.

The first of *Baisakh*, first month of the *Vikram* era, is celebrated as *VaishA:ki:* or *Baisakhi* in Kashmir like other parts of the sub-continent. The people visit *Mughal* Gardens, like *Nishat* and *Shalimar*, which are thrown open for the public by the Government of Kashmir from this day as a special case. Most of the Hindus visit the *GuptI Ganga* spring at *IshibAr* near *Nishat* Garden and take a dip in the holy water of the spring and pay their respects to the deity at the temple of *Shiva* in the vicinity of the shrine garden. This day is generally falls on after the eleventh bright half of *Chaitra* and it also coincides with the 13th or 14th of April (of the

Christian era) approximately every year. It is the concluding day of cold and the beginning of spring in Kashmir whereas the spring season in Jammu comes to an end on this date and the summer season begins. It is an old belief that the dog is born on this date and offerings of eatable especially; '*So>tsal*'[1] is prepared for the dog and offered to it along with rice or bread.

6. Hanuman Jayanti.
(Hanuma:nI Sund Vo>harvod)

The fifteenth day of the bright half of the month of *Chaitr* is celebrated as the birthday of *Hanuman*. On this day the people of Srinagar go to the *Hanuman* Temple situated at Amira Kadal, Srinagar. The people in other parts of the valley also visit other temples of the state where there is an idol of *Hanuman.*

7. Vi:ta:l Shayam - Vaita:l Jayanti:

The whole valley is distributed among a number of deities known as *BhA:rav or 'Bhairav'*, [2] like *Bhuteshowar Ra:zI Bhairav, Ganganand Ra:zI Bhairav, Parshuram Ra:zI Bhairav, Rodra Ra:zI Bhairav, Kuver Ra:zI Bhairav, Jaggar Nath Ra:zI Bhairav, Arzan Nath Ra:zI Bhairav, Anandi:showar Ra:zI Bhairav, Nandi:showar Ra:zI Bhairav, Va:geshowar Ra:zI Bhairav, Vi:ta:l Ra:zI Bhairav* and so on. It is a belief that they have their own territories, jurisdictions and limits

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[1] It is an old belief that the vegetable '*So>tsal*' is impure till '*Vaishakhi:*' and its use was forbade till this date.

[2] The whole valley was divided into three traditional divisions, known as *Ra:zI* or *Ra:ja,* namely 1. *Mara:z (MaDav ra:jya)*, south Kashmir, 2. *Yamra:z*, Srinagar city, and 3. *Kamara:z:, (Ka:rma ra:jya)* north Kashmir each having a Principalities of different Bhairavas. Srinagar division was said to be under the charge of *Rodra ra:zI,(Ra:ja) Bhairv.*

through out the valley of Kashmir and they are considered to be in charge of their respective areas. The word *BhA:rav* appears a derived form from the Sanskrit word, '*Bhairava*', the name attributed to Lord *Shiva*. This shows that the valley remained under the sway of the *Shaiva* philosophy from times immemorial. The valuable information about some such *Bhairavs* has been erased at the cruel hands of time while faint descriptions about a few such deities still exists. One among them is the *Vi:ta:l* or *Vaita:l Bhairav*. On this day the birthday of the deity is celebrated at his temple at Rainawari, Srinagar where a big *Hawan* is held on the occasion. People attend the shrine of the *Bhairav* and offer yellow cooked rice along with cooked liver of a goat/lamb to the deity.

On this day the '*Shra:dh*', anniversary of *Rishi Peer* too is celebrated at his shrine at Bulbul Lankar, Zaina Kadal, Srinagar. Thousands of people both Hindus and Muslims participate in the function. The Hindus perform a *Hawan* at his shrine on this date and people of both the communities remain vegetarian for the full day. Both these celebrations are held on the sixth of dark half of the month of '*Vahyakh*' or *Baisakh* every year. In case, however, the '*Tithi*' is '*Deva*, the *Shra:dh* of *Rishi Peer* is celebrated one day earlier to the *Vaita:l Shyayam.*

8. Vijay Saftami -
(Mattan) Martand Ti:rtha.

In the first, second or third months of the *Vikram* era, i.e. *Baisakh, Je'shat* or *Ashada*, if the horal moment or the '*Tithi*' is '*Punarvasu*', falling on the dark half of the seventh and on a Sunday of any of these months, the possibility of *Vijay Saftami:*, falling on such days (as a horal moment) increases. On this date a good number of Hindus visit the *Martand Tirtha* at Mattan, commonly known as Bhawan. It is also called the *Surya Tirtha* in our

scriptures and is famous for giving offerings to the manes and performing rites in their honour. The devotees after clean shaving their heads, called "*Vo>pun*' hold a *Shra:dh* of their manes on the banks of the stream flowing out from the Martand Spring, called '*tsa:ka*'.

9. GanI tso>dah *or GAnshi tso>dah*
Birthday of Lord Ganesha.

The birthday of Lord *Ganesha* is celebrated on the fourteenth day of bright fortnight of the month of '*Vaisha:kh:*'. People prepare small fried sweet pancakes known as '*Pu:ri*' and small ball like fried sweetmeats called '*LADi*' on this festival and attend the temple of Lord *Ganesha* at Ganpathya:r, Srinagar. After oblation and making offering to the Lord, the devotees distribute the remaining pancakes and '*LADi*' among all the devotees who attend the temple for prayers. A big *Hawan* is also held here on this date.

10. BhAdrIkA:li jayanti,
Birthday of goddess Bhadrakali.

Bhadrakali is one of the names given to the Mother Goddess whose birthday is celebrated on eleventh day of the dark fortnight of '*Je'shta*'. Her abode is believed to be at '*BhAdrIkA:li:*', a small village in Handwara district of Kashmir valley. Here, a small spring and a temple, is dedicated to the said goddess, a mention whereof exists in our '*Mahatmyas*'. On this date a big *Hawan* is held at the said temple and people come from far and near to take part and celebrate it here. It is said that the goddess showed her presence at the said place on ninth day of the dark fortnight of '*Ashwin*' and hence people attend this place on this date also and offer prayers.

11. Ze'ThI A:Tham –
Birthday of Goddess Ragnya.

The birthday of goddess *Ragnya* is celebrated on eighth day of the bright fortnight of '*Je'shta*' at her abode considred at Tula Mula, in Ganderbal Tehsil of Srinagar district. The word '*TulI Mula*', comprises two Kashmiri words, '*Tula*', means a mulberry (tree) and '*Mula*', means the roots. It is said that at the sight of the present spring a big mulberry tree existed and the spring sprouted forth from under its roots and hence the name '*TulI Mula*'. A large gathering is held here on the said day and the Hindus of Kashmir come to pay their reverence to the Mother goddess on this date from far and near areas of the state. A big *Hawan* is held here on the occasion. This is one of the holiest of the holy places of northern India and people visit this place throughout the year, as such, there is always a scene of pilgrimage here on each day especially on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of every lunar month, the presence of the devotees is comparatively more on such occasions. A *Hawan* is performed on all such occasions. The temple of goddess *Ragnya* is built of the white marble and is situated in the middle of the spring. It is said that the colour of the spring changes occasionally indicating the coming social, economic and political upheavals/changes, good or bad, whatsoever that are expected to take place in the valley. It is also known by the name of '*Khi:r Bhawani:*' as the people worship the Mother goddess here by offering milk, called '*Kshi:r*' in Sanskrit, hence '*Khi:r Bhawani:*'.

12. Nirjala Ekadashi (Ne'rzala: Ka:h)
The Waterless Eleventh.

The eleventh day of the bright half of the month of *Je'shta* is known as '*Nirjala Ekadashi*'. On this day Hindus observe complete fast and do not take even water. Pitchers filled with water are donated in the name of deceased ancestors on this day as a religious rite. It is said that in ancient times a *Rishi* was refused drinking water on this date so he cursed that the day should be observed as 'Waterless *Ekadashi*' from thence onwards.

13. Ro>pI Bhawa:ni: Jayanti -
The Birthday of Ropa Bhawani.

The birthday of the saint poetess of Kashmir *Shaiva* philosophy, the incarnation of Mother goddess '*Sharika*', '*Ro>pI Bhawa:ni:*', is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the bright half of the month of *Je'shta*. There are a number of stories attributed to her incarnation. She was born in the family of *Dhars,* and was married in the *Saproo* family, the two famous sub-casts of Hindus in the valley. She was not treated well by her mother-in-law who was ignorant about her true identity. After *Lallesho>ri:*, she is the second most famous saint poetess of Kashmir who expressed the deep *Shaiva* philosophy in *Va:khs* [1]. She was the cotemporary of famous Su:fi: poet of Kashmir, *Shah Qalander*. A number of miracles are attributed to her during her tours in the length and breadth of the valley. The Hindus and the Muslims of the valley, alike revered her. Her birthday is celebrated at Safakadal, Srinagar at her original place of birth. On this day a big *Hawan* is held in which thousands participate. Her death anniversary is held on the seventh day of the dark half of

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[1] For details p.s., *Ro>pI Bha:wani:, - Akh Sa:m*, by Pandit, S,N., Published by the University of Kashmir, Srinagar ,1983 .

the month of *'Ashwin'*. In case, however the *'Tithi'* is *'Deva'* (Extended over a period of two days), her *Shra:dh* is held a day earlier. This day is known as *'Sa:hiban HInz Satam'*. A number of stories of Hindu-Muslim amity are prevalent about the death of this great saint poetess of Kashmir. On the day of her annual *Shra:dh,* all her devotees keep a fast and perform a *Hawan* and take part in the celebrations. It is a common practice that when a girl from the *Dhar* family is married in a Kashmiri family having a different sub-cast, the people of that family have to celebrate the, *'Sa:hiban HInz Satam'* or the *Shra:dh* ceremony of this mystic poetess. This day is also celebrated at Vaskur and Lar villages of the Kashmir valley with great faith and reverence. The devotees after their exodus from the valley, have established a few centers in honour of this great poetess at a number of places in Jammu and Delhi where discussions and discourses on the *Va:khs* of the poetess are held from time to time.

14. Ha:rI Satam –
Laying of the ManDul
(Drawing a Circle Decorated With Colours).

Early in the morning, the ladies of the house wash and clean the whole house on seventh day of the bright half of *'Ashada'*. With the help of white chalk powder and colours, made from local flowers and leaves, they make circular figures on the front lawns, verandahs, corridors and in the kitchen, called *'Ha:rI ManDul'*. On one such circular figure, made in the kitchen, they keep a little rice and some water in a cup or a tumbler and in it they place a small branch of a pomegranate tree along with its blossom. A basket is kept on it so as to cover it for the day and in the evening it is thrown away under a

pomegranate tree. This appears to be a sign of welcome to the two day celebrations which follow this day.

15. Ha:rI A:Tham -
Day attributed to the Mother Goddess.

Eeighth day of the bright fortnight of the month of 'A*shada*' is consecrated to Mother Goddess and celebrations are held at a number of places in the valley. The prominent among these are, *Khi:r Bhawani*, Tulamula, *Mangla* Devi:[1]- Wachi:, Anantnag, *Di:vi: Bal* - Anantnag, *BargI Sha:kha: Bhagwati:*[2], Deva Sar, Anantnag., and *Po>khri Bal*, Hari Parbath, Srinagar . At all these places big *Hawans* are held and people from different places visit and pay their homage to the goddess there. Almost all the people keep a fast on this date and sweetmeats, pancakes, *'Pu:ri'* and puddings are prepared and after oblation, these are distributed among all those present on such occasions at various places of pilgrimage.

16. Ha:rI Navam-
The Birthday of goddess Ṡharika

The birthday of goddess *Sharika*[3] is celebrated on the ninth day of the bright fortnight of *'Ashada'*, whose abode is believed on the western top of the hillock popularly known as '*Hari Parbath*'. There are a number of stories about the formation of this hillock as contained in the *Nilamata Purana*,, *'Kashmir Mahatmyas'* and the *'Katha Sarita Sagara'* and the common belief is that Mother Goddess in the form of '*Sharika*' known as,

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[1] A name attributed to Mother Goddess whose abode is considered near Watchi village in District Anantnag.
[2] It is a name given to the Mother Goddess.
[3] It is a name given to the Mother Goddess.

'*HA:r*' in the common Kashmiri language, carried the hillock in its beak and thus closed forever the gate of the hell created by the demon '*Jalodbhava*'. The demon, *Jalodbhava*, meaning 'born from the water' had created a hell in the vicinity of the '*Sati Sara*' or the Lake of goddess *Parwati* who closed the mouth of the lake with the hillock and thus the demon was got killed. Hence this hillock is known as *Hari Parbat*. A large temple is constructed where the goddess is worshipped in the form of '*Shri ·Yantra*', a mystical figure, according to the '*Tantra Loka*'. Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits visit this place on the said day and a big '*Hawan*' is held here. The celebrations are extended all over the five km. road existing around the small hillock known as the '*Parikrama*'. The devotees circumambulate round it over this path on all festival days. The day is also known as the '*Sharika Jayanti*' all over the Jammu and Kashmir state. In Jammu the devotees go to *Durga* Temple situated at the *Bahu Fort* and worship goddess *Durga*. *Hawans* are also held at a number of places and oblations are distributed among the devotees who visit these places.

17. Ha:rI Tso>da:h-

The Birthday of Jwala Ji 'Za:la: Di:vi:.'

The fourteenth day of the bright half of the month of *Ha:r*, '*Ashada*' is consecrated to *Jwala Devi*[1] situated at Khrew, Kashmir on the hillock, known as '*Za:lI mo>kh*'. At the foot of the said hill is a spring where the devotees take a bath and then proceed towards the up-hill temple. In the temple is an image of goddess *Jwala* in the form of a mystical *Yantra*. The people take the yellow rice called '*TAhAr*' and cooked meat preferably liver and un-cooked lungs including the heart, known as

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[1] One of the names attributed to the Mother Goddess.

Shu:shno<r' of a lamb or a goat as an offering to the goddess. The *'Shu:shno<r'* is offered along with a *'Tahari tso>t'* to the kites and crows, present in large numbers in the vicinity of the hillock and the temple on this day. .The remaining *TAhAr* is distributed among the devotees present there on the occasion as an oblation. While returning people slide down the long flat rocks at the southern end of the hillock known as *'KhIrI Pa:tIj'*. It is believed that by doing so the sins of a person are mitigated after they slide down on these flat rocks.

18. Ha:rI Punim - HAri Sho>r Pilgrimage.

The fifteenth day of the bright half of *Ashada* is the pilgrimage day to the famous cave shrine of *'HAri Sho>r'* situated on a hill of the same name near the famous village of *'Kho>nI muh'*, Pampore. The cave is situated on a steep hillock nearly eight km. away from the main village. The idols of *Shiva, Parwati, Ganesha* and *Kumara* exist in the cave and the image of the snake *'Shesh Nāga'* is engraved on its roof. The devotees take a dip in the spring situated at the foot of the hill in the village and start the climb early in the morning. On reaching the cave shrine one finds the whole valley of Kashmir looking like a big flower garden. A detailed description of this pilgrimage is contained in a folk song which starts with the couplet, *'Andar atsu gofi Harshi:showar'* , which gives a complete description of this hilly abode of Lord *Shiva*. A reference to this secret hilly abode of *Shiva*, venerated by all the Hindus of the valley and abroad, is contained in the *'Tirtha Ssangraha'*[1] This day is also venerated as the *"Guru Pu:rnima'* and *Hawans* and *'Guru Pooja'* is held on this day.

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[1] *Rajtarangiini*, by Kalhane. Trans. By Stein, M.A., 1979 Vol. I, I- 220 (fn.) and Vol,.II, P. 458-59.

19. Kamla: Ka:h - Venerating Goddess Kamla:.

This day is celebrated on the eleventh day of the dark half of the month of '*Shravana*'. The day is consecrated to *Kamla*[1]. It is a small spring situated in the dense forests of '*BugI Mo>r*', the name of a small hillock to the south of the famous township of Tral Kashmir. The spring is covered with *Devdar* trees on all sides and the roots of these trees have encircled the sides of the spring. The well-like spring thus formed is reported to be very deep. A small stream flows out of the spring and the devotees take a bath here. The ancient ruins at the sight are a testimony to its old grandeur. Only a few devotees residing in the nearby villages visit this place now.

20. Shra:vanI Ba:h - Liberation of the 'young' manes

Shopian, district Pulwama, Kashmir is the place for the salvation of the manes who have died at a young age or prior to the holding of their *Yagnyopavita* ceremony. The '*Shra:dh*' of such of the manes is held here on the twelfth day of the bright half of the month of '*Shravana*' at *Na:gI Bal*, Bhattapora, Shopian There are two springs at the foot of the hill to the south of the Shopian town close to the *Pirpanchal* Range across the *RAmbia:rI,* a well known rivulet of south Kashmir. It is surrounded by a small habitation known as *Dega:m*. In the upper spring is a *'Lingham of Shiva'* with cellular body, *'Ka:pa:lika'* The legend says that *Shiva* was cleared off from the sins of severing the head of a *Brahmin,* '*Kapa:la*' after he took a bath in this spring, commonly

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[1] One of the names given to goddess *Lakshmi*.

known as *'Kapa:lI Mu:tsan'* (*'Kapala Mochana'*). Pilgrims from far and near places of the valley and even from the northern states of the sub-continent, come to this place for performing the *Shra:dh* of their manes. The sight on the date of the pilgrimage, otherwise a highly calm and beautiful spot, is very heart rending on the specific date due to the wailing and weeping of the mothers whose children have died very young.

21. Sha:ravanI Punim,
The Amar Nath Pligrimage

The fifteenth bright half of the month of *Shravana* or *Savan* known as ' *Shra:vnI Punim*', is one among the most sacred days of the year. On this day the devotees have the first glimpse of *Swami Amarnath ji* after the continuous and hazardous journey to the cave for a number of days. People from all the states and even from abroad come to Kashmir ahead of the scheduled date so as to take part in this pilgrimage. This day is exclusively meant for making prayers at the Amarnath cave of Lord *Shiva* where an ice *Shiva Lingham* is formed in the said cave. People observe total austerity for all the days of journey and every body young and old, keeps a fast on this day. The other places of pilgrimage visited on this day are, '*Thajiwara,*' known as '*ThAjwo>r*' near Bijbihara: town. Those who are unable to go to *Amarnath,* visit this place for holding special prayers. While the pilgrims pay their obeisance to the '*Ice Lingam'* at the cave of *Amarnath ji*, the devotees worship the Lingam of Shiva at *Thajiwara* temple. A number of people visit the *Shankarachayra* temple, near Srinagar Kashmir. People make sweetmeats on this day and illuminate the local *Shiva* temples.

This day is also celebrated as '*Raksha Bandhan'*. Sisters make preparations for the celebration of this

festival a few days earlier. They purchase '*Rakhis*' of their choice ahead of the festival. On this day they get up early in the morning and after their return from temples they meet their brothers and tie the '*Rakhis*', also known as '*Rakhri*', on their wrists. It is a colourful raw thread with a piece of decoration in the middle of it. In this way they get a good gratification from their brothers after they mark their foreheads with red vermilion. The ladies, who don't have any brothers, tie '*Rakhis*' to some one from among their close relatives and thus make him their brothers.

22. Navdal Tso<ram –

Rites after Amarnath Pilgrimage.

Navdal is a small village enroute Tral township just at a distance of 5 km from Awantipora, a small town on the main Jammu-Srinagar Highway. Here is a cluster of nine springs known as *Navdal*. This place was used as one of the camping sites for the night-stay when the pilgrimage to *Amarnqth Ji* was made on foot from Srinagar. While returning from the pilgrimage, the pilgrims would perform the *Shra:dh* of their manes on the fourth day of the dark half of the month of *Bhadu:n* at this place. Here also, as at some of the other places of pilgrimages attributed to the manes, balls of barley flour are offered to the manes. The Hindus of the valley believe that a person who performs the pilgrimage to *Amarnath ji* but does not perform the *Shra:dh* of his manes at '*Navdal*', is considered to carry a load of a dog on his back till he performs such a *Shra:dh* here.

23. *Tsandan ShyashTi:* - Purification of Ones Own Self

The sixth day of the dark half of the month of *Bhadu:n* is celebrated as '*Tsandan ShyashTi:*' It is also known as '*TsAndrI ShyaTh,* among common Kashmiri women folk. It is a day specifically meant for the women folk only. The meaning of the two words is 'sixty moons', if we take '*ShyaTh*' as 'sixty' and not as a deteriorated form of '*ShyashTi*', meaning ' six/sixth'. In this way it has some resemblance with the '*Karwa Chowth*' which is held on the fourth dark half of the month of *Kartila.*[1] This festival of the Indian sub-continent is not celebrated in the valley so vigorously even to this date as it is in vogue in other parts of the country. This festival too is celebrated by the women folk in which women break the fast at night after looking at the moon and the face of their husband simultaneously through the holes of a sieve. Even with this resemblance, the two festivals are celebrated on two different dates. According to the Indian ethos, a woman is worshipped in the form of '*Shakti*' whereas a man is considered '*Shiva*'. The body is '*Shiva*' whereas his spouse is the soul in the form of '*Shakti*'. *Shakti* is the propeller and man propels. '*Shakti*' is the source of all actions - good as well as bad. In order to wash off the sins committed by a woman during her day-to-day chores, knowingly or unknowingly, the scriptures have advised her to observe this day of, '*Chandan ShyashTi*' according to the praxis as laid down in the scriptures.[2]. The women folk observe a complete fast on this day. In addition to this they also pray for the long life of their husbands through whom they

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[1] In case the '*Tithi*' is '*Deva*' on both the festivals, the celebrations are held a day earlier

[2] Bhatt, Pandit Jyotshi Keshav, *Brihat Stotra Ratnakar, Chandan Shyshti Vrita Udhyapana,* 1940. P. 31-37.

extend and expand all their power. The scriptures have advised her to take a bath two times on the said day, one in the morning and the other in the after noon. It is a practice that while bathing they apply pastes of red sandal-wood, commonly known as '*RakhtI Tsandun*' and white sandal-wood, known as '*Safeyd Tsandun*' to their whole body. It is a day of complete fasting for all the married women folk, whether old or young. All spend the whole day in prayers and bathing. They also paste their foreheads with the said sandalwood pastes before and after each bath and refrain from taking salt for the whole day. In the evening they have to look at the rising moon first at the dead of night and then prepare pancakes of wheat flour made from the fresh wheat crop of that year and eat the same with sugar or milk.

Like all other days of fasting and penance, the old and infirm women have been advised by the scriptures to give up observing the fast after a ritual, known as '*ChandrI ShyaTh Muchin*'. For this purpose they have to arrange a small '*Hawan*' and perform some religious rites as prescribed in the scriptures. [1]

24. Janam Ashtami – . ZarmI Satam
Lord Krishna's Birthday.

The scriptures and books on astrology confirm that Lord *Krishna* was born at the dead of night i. e., at the time of moon-rise on the eighth dark half of the month of *Bhadu:n*, known also as '*BA;dIri Pyath*'. The day brings joy to all young and old. Having taken a bath early in the morning, the elderly people spend the day in fasting and praying. The young people too keep a fast and a number of preparations of cookies made from chest-nut

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[1] Bhatt, Pandit Jyotshi Keshav, *Brihat Stotra Ratnakar, Chandan Shyshti Vrita Udhyapana*, 1940. P. 31-37.

flour, fruit, milk are a special treat for them of the day. Beautiful swings are decorated in each house for swinging the portraits of Lord *Krishna* depicting his exploits. '*Krishna Li:la*': and '*Li:la:*' songs are sung /played in all the homes for the whole day. In the afternoon rallies and processions depicting tableaux of various exploits of Lord *Krishna* are taken out in all the big streets in the main tows and cities of the valley as is held in other parts of the sub-continent. Thousands of people come out to witness this procession locally called *'Vi:dI Bhagwa:n'*

25. *Darbi Ma:vas.*
The Day of Darbha, Kusha).

All the religious rituals and rites are the soul of a compact society like that of the Kashmiri Pandits. Offerings, recitations and the use of *Kusha:*, (Sword grass) milk, curd, water, flowers, incense etc., are its imperative components for all the day to day rituals. Hence a day has been earmarked in the scriptures for procuring the fresh '*Kusha*'. This day falls on the fifteenth day of the dark half of '*Bhadrapada*, known as *'Darbi Ma:vas'*. It is also know as '*Pap Mochini Amavasya*' i.e., -'the fifteenth day of the dark fortnight for expiation of all sins'. On this day, after taking a bath, new *'Kusha'* is brought into the house and a bunch of seven straws of fresh '*Darbha*' with a reverse knot, called '*Upyam*' or *'Vo>pya:m'* in the common Kashmiri language, is kept over the main gate on the right side of it. This day is celebrated in honour of the manes.

26. *Vina:yak Tso<ram* -
Obeisance to Lord *Ganesha.*

It is celebrated on the fourth day of the bright half of *Bhadrapada* known as '*Vina:yak Tso<ram*'. '*Vinayak*'

is one of the names given to 'Lord *Ganesh*, the propeller of all our actions according to the scriptures. The birthday of Lord *Ganesh* is celebrated on this day and hence the day is also known as, '*Vinayak Chaturthi*'. It is considered extremely auspicious in case it falls on a Sunday. Kashmiri Hindus make a special kind of sweet pancakes out of the flour made from the fresh wheat during some of the auspicious days of this fortnight. The thick sweet pancakes added with some dry fruits are fried in ghee. It is called '*RoTh*' Most of the people adhere to the date of the fourth day of the said fortnight as it is considered as the most auspicious but in case it is not possible to adhere to this date, the preparations are made on a subsequent date and offerings are made to the deity. The ritual is known as '*Pan dyun*'. In case it is not possible for a family to make the offering during the said period due to some unavoidable circumstances, the ritual is held on the bright fifteenth day of the month of '*Kartik*'. Due to its long tradition the function has taken the shape of a deep-rooted ritual and no body dares to offend the deity by discontinuing the offerings. Besides, a raw thread of freshly harvested cotton is got spun on this date and worn by the elderly lady of the house in the ear along with a new '*ATIho*>r'. She keeps a fast on the day till the offerings of pancakes are made to the deity. The thread is to be got spun by an un-married /virgin girl called, '*Kanyak*'. She is offered a small bread called, '*KanyakI Vo>r*', a 'small pancake' specially prepared for her. In addition to this she is given some cash as gratification for spinning the thread out of the fresh cotton. The local cotton of the valley was ready for collection in the month of '*Bhadrapada*. Hence its first offering was made to the deity. The cultivation of cotton no more exists in the valley since long due to the introduction of some other cash crops, but still the festival and the ritual is observed by the Hindus of this land as it

was held centuries ago. The practice is still in vogue even after the exodus of the people form the valley.

The pancakes thus prepared are also called *'Vi:r BhAdrun RoTh'*, preparation of pancakes in honour of *'Vir Bhadra*, the family deity. There is a practice of narrating a happy ending folk story while performing the ritual. Every member of the family is given a handful of green grass, *'Dramun,'* filled with some grains of soaked barley, rice and flowers. The things are put in the pot, called *'Kalash'*, already kept at the place of performance. The elder member of the family narrates the story and all hear it attentively. After observing the ritual, the oblation is distributed among all friends, relatives and neighbours. Newly married brides have to present a good number of specially baked *'RoThs'*, got prepared through a professional baker, for her in-laws on this ritual.

27. *GangI A:Tham; -*

Oblation to the manes on the birthday of the Ganga.

The eighth bright half of the month of *'Bhadrapada'* is celebrated as *'Ganga AshTami'*. A pilgrimage, known as *'Haramukat Yyatra'*, is held at *'GangI Bal'* on this date. It is one of the far flung areas of Handwara Tehsil and the last habitat on this pilgrimage is *'SamsA:ri Na:g'*. The Hindus of the valley go there to perform the *'Ti:rthI Shra:dh'* of the manes and till recently the last remains of the dead, were immersed into the *'GangIbal'* lake. The Rajatarangini confirms the presence of a big temple of *'Bhuteshwar'* or *'Shiva Bhutesh*"[1] here. It is also said that Ashok got the boon for a son from *Shiva Bhutesh* after a great penance[2]. The remains of the temple and of the idol are no more to be seen here now. Besides, due to the division of the sub-

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[1] A name attributed to *Shiva.*

[2] Bamzai, P.N.K., *A. History of Kashmir*, II Ed. 1973, P. 68.

continent, this pilgrimage is no more held in this part of the country because of its location near the Line of Control.

28. Lal Ded Jayanti:-
Birthday of Lalleshowari:,

The birth day of the first saint poetess of Kashmir, popularly known as *'Lal Ded'*, *'Lalle'sho>r:i* ', *'Lalla'* *'LallI MA:j'* falls on the eighth day of the bright half of *Bhardapada*. She is considered as the originator of the *'Va:kh'* form of verses of poetry. Almost all her *'Va:khs'* are on the, tip of the tongue of many people of Kashmir and are cherished and admired even today, for their deep meaning, excellent thoughts, beauty of language and minimum use of words. Not much is known about this great poetess of Kashmir except her thoughtful *Va:khs*, considered as a great treasure of Kashmiri language and literature in which deep thoughts of Kashmir *Shaiva* philosophy are beautifully explained in a very simple and lucid manner. She is believed to have been born in a Brahmin family in the middle of the 14^{th} century at *'Puranadhishthan'*, modern Pandrethan, nearly 11 Km to the south of Srinagar. Her parentage is unknown. She was married at Pampôre, a nearby village, at a very young age but her mother-in-law did not treat *Lalla* well. The atrocities of the in-laws became more unbearable, she finally left the house and found her *'Guru'* in *'Siddha Shrikanth'*, commonly known as ' *SyadI Mo<l'* a mystic living at Pampore and practiced, *'Pranayam'* in seclusion under his guidance. All respected her. The Muslims called her *'Lalla Arifa'* whereas she was *'Lallesho<ri:'* for the Hindus of the valley. During the latter part of her life she became a wandering preacher of mysticism that had its deep impact on the Indian Mysticism, *'Rahasyavada'*.[1]

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[1] Bamzai, P.N.K., A History of Kashmir,, Sec. Ed., 1973, P. 543.

Having been born in a Brahmin family, her date of birth has been taken from the diary of her family priest who maintain such records in respect of their followers.

On this day a big *Hawan* is held at '*Umanagri*', Anantnag at the temple site. Due to the exodus of the Hindus from the valley, this *Hawan* is now held at *Muthi Asharam* by the '*Umanagri,* Temple Committee' since last many years.

29. VyathI Truwa:h. –
Birthday of Vitasta:.

The thirteenth bright fortnight of '*Bhadu:n*' is celebrated as the birthday of river '*Vitasta*' also named as '*Jehlim*' and '*Vyath*'. It is believed that on this date '*Vitasta*' appeared at '*VyathI Vo>tur*', near Verinag after her descent from the main spring. On this date a big gathering is held at this place since very ancient times. Kalhan has given its name as '*Vitastatra*' and has confirmed it as one of the major places of pilgrimage. Now a day the pilgrimage is held at 'Verinag.' People also pay their reverence to the river *Vitasta* at all major places and habitations situated on its banks and offer milk and flowers to the river water. A big *Hawan* is held at the '*Gauri: Sho>ri* [1]'; temple at village 'Gairoo' presently called 'Noorpora'[2]. It is after the name of '*Gauri*' or '*Uma*' that the village of 'Gairoo' has got its name that has changed from '*Gauri*' into 'Gairoo'. Here is an old spring and a temple known as *Gauri Sho>ri: Asthapan*. The function of the birthday of the river 'Vitasta:' is also celebrated here ever year.

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[1] A name attributed to goddess *Bhawani* who is also called *Gauri*

[2]. The name of a small village on the Srinagar–Tral main road at a distance of nearly thirty km .from Srinagar.

30. AntI Tso>dah -
The Celebrations at Anantnag.

From the very name, the celebration appears of a very ancient origin at least when the '*Naga*', or the serpent worship, was very common among the people of Kashmir. The reminiscences of this worship are found even today in the old dress pattern of our ladies who wear a long piece of serpent shaped cloth on their headgears. On this day people wear the '*Anath*' made of raw cotton woven into a serpent shape. The males wear an '*Anath*', made from white thread, in their *Yagnyopavita* whereas the ladies wear a red coloured one in their ear rings. A great pilgrimage is held on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of *Bhadu:n* at *Na:gabal*, Anantnag where people take a bath at a number of springs and pay homage to their deities in the temples. Big congregations are also held at the local springs generally called as '*Nagabal.*'

31. Ka:mbIri Pach-
A Fortnight for the Manes.

One full dark fortnight of '*A:shid*' or '*Asu:j*' is dedicated to the manes according to their '*Tithis*' of death anniversaries extended over all the months of a lunar year. It can be any '*Tithi*' of a fortnight of any month of the year on which the death anniversary of any of the manes is held. The *Shra:dh* of all such manes is held on that very '*Tithi*' during this fortnight called '*Pitri Paksha*'. One who is not able to perform the *Shra:dh* of his fore-father's on the due '*Tithi*', due to obvious reasons can do so on the concluding '*Tithi*' i.e.' *Amawasya*', commonly known as '*Pitri Amawasya*' 'the fifteenth dark fortnight dedicated to the manes'. During this period the harvesting of paddy is in full swing in whole of the valley and the rice of the fresh crop is generally thought as auspicious to be offered to the

manes first during this fort-night. The villagers are mostly busy with the work of harvesting. Besides it is the ripening season for all kind of fruit and vegetable available in plenty. during the period that are offered to the manes.

There is a restriction for holding all auspicious activities during this fortnight according to our scriptures.

32. Nava Durga:-
Eight Days Dedicated to Mother Goddess

The first eight days of the bright fortnight of the month of *Asu:j* are dedicated to Mother Goddess *Durga*. It is also called the autumn '*NavI Durga/Ratra.*' The fasting, holding of daily prayers and sowing of barley is done as already described while discussing the *NavIratra* celebrations of the spring '*NavI Durga*". The harvesting is complete. The fruit-season is over and the harvested crops have properly been stored. Hence the first offering and prayers for a week's period for the gods after paying reverence to the manes during the first fortnight of the month.

33. Maha: Navam -
Return of Lord Ram From the Exile.

The scriptures say that Lord *Ram*, during his exile, '*Vanva:s*' of fourteen years, killed *Ravan* on the bright ninth day of the month of '*Asu:j*'. It is considered as one of the illustrious deeds done by Lord *Ram* during his exile. Hence, called '*Maha Navmi.*' This day is celebrated on the ninth day of the bright half of *Asu:j* as a day of victory of Virtue over Vice. People go to the *Ram* temples for paying their reverence to the Lord *Ram* for he liberated *Sita* on this date. It is also celebrated as the day of salvation of Mother Goddess '*Swarswati*' in the form of *Sita*. In the morning people prepare puddings and sweetmeats and after making offerings to Mother

Goddess they distribute these among all their relatives and neighbours.

34. Dashiha:r (Dasera)-
Celebrations in Honour of Lord Ram.

On hearing about the victory of Lord *Ram* over *Ravan,* the demon king of Lanka, the people of Ayodhya rejoiced and they burnt the effigies of *Ravan, Meghanath,* and *Kumbhakarn* on the tenth day of the bright half of *Ashwin.* As such, it is also called '*Vijay Dashmi*'- the tenth 'Victory day'. The practice of burning the effigies is still prevalent in the length and breadth of the country and is celebrated as '*Dashiha:r*' in the whole of the valley and other parts of the country. In Kashmir, the main function is held at Hazoori Bagh , Srinagar. In Jammu the function is held at Parade Ground. Thousands of people go to witness this sight and return with a piece of half burnt wood, paper or cloth of the effigies and keep it in their houses as a booty. It is a belief that the presence of such things in the house, keeps away all evil sprits and the effect of witchcraft.

35. DI:pI Ma:la:,(Dipawali) -
An evening of lights.

This celebration is held on the fifteenth day of the dark half.of the month of '*Kartik*' or '*Kattak*'. It is said that on this date *Ram,* his spouse, *Sita* and his brother, *Lakshaman*, returned to Ayodhya: after the exile of fourteen years and that too after killing *Ravan*. People of Ayodhya greeted their beloved by illuminating their houses and streets with lamps of ghee and candles. This practice still continues and we illuminate our houses and streets on this date. Hence, known as '*Di:p Ma:la:*, 'a garland of lamps'. People keep fast and visit *Shri Ram*

temples from early morning. Sweetmeats are prepared in almost all the families. The day is of more significance for the businessmen because they start their new books/ registers of income and expenditure from this date. As such, this day is celebrated as the day dedicated to Mother Goddess *Lakshmi*. New registers/books are duly adorned with the marking of *'Swastika'*. All the business establishments offer sweets, pancakes and sweetmeats to the goddess. Homes, shops, business establishments and offices are illuminated with candles, earthen lamps of ghee/oil and electric lights. It is because of all this illumination that the night is also known as ' *Dipawali*,' 'a row of lamps'. Some of the business establishments offer discount on their products to the customers on the eve of this festival for full one months' period.

36. Ga:DI BattI –
Offerings to the Deity Incharge of the Home

According to our belief, there is a deity in charge of each house. In order to pleased him, a number of offerings are made to it according to the family customs/ traditions. Some people make the offerings of rice and fish during the dark fortnight of *"Po>h*' on any of the Tuesdays or Saturdays. By studying the requirements of the celebrations on the occasion, one can easily say that the ritual appears to have been entrusted to us by the *Pishachas*, the original inhabitants of the valley, who allowed the *Aryans* to stay in the valley for the full year after observing certain rites and rituals. The preparations for the function start from early in the morning. Every body must be neat and clean on this date. Ladies take utmost care to take a bath and remain clean and chaste on this day. The whole house is swept and cleaned. The place where the offerings for the deity are placed (generally on the second or third floor) is besmeared with clay and

water. Cooked rice and fish is offered to the deity. Some people offer a raw fish as well while others don't allow even their close relatives to stay in their house on this day. In the evening offerings are placed for the deity on the besmeared and selected place. A lamp is lit and kept beside the plate containing the offerings and it is covered with a willow basket. After paying obeisance all the family members take remaining food as an oblation from the deity. In the common language the deity is called '*GarI Devta*;' and a number of stories about miracles done by the deity are prevalent among different families including those who make such offerings to their '*Devata*'. Next morning the contents of the plate are offered to the birds while some families take it as an oblation from the deity

37. Mahakali Jayanti -
The Birthday of Maha Kali .

The eighth day of the dark fortnight of '*Paush*' or '*Po>h*', is celebrated as the birthday of '*Mahakali*', [1] also called '*Maha:kA:li:*' in Kashmiri language. In Srinagar it is celebrated at Fateh Kadal at the famous *Khanqah* of *Sayed Ali Shah Hamadani*, commonly known as '*Shah-i-Hamada:n*'. The *Khanqah* is on the main road side, (Habbakadal-Zainakadal road,) whereas the temple of Maha Kali is at the back of the same complex on the river side. It is said that the original spring of the deity is inside the said *Khanqah* and its water flows along the side of the temple. The devotees visit this place on the said date from early in the morning and the celebrations continue for the full day. The devotees offer yellow rice, called '*TAhAr*' and cooked liver of goat or lamb to the deity. The *Puranas* have described *Kali* as incarnations of

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1 One of the names given the Mother Goddess, in her furious form.

Durga. She is said to be of black colour, wearing a garland of skulls, with out-stretched tongue, possessing four strong arms, carrying a skull in her left hand and a sickle in the right hand. She is described to be the annihilator of all evils. A similar temple is at proper Tral, Tehsil head quarters near the Shrine of *Shah-i-Hamadan* and here the devotees of the area assemble on the birthday of the goddess for holding special prayers at the temple which is built near a small spring of the said deity. The place is locally known as '*Kru:ntshIbal*'.

38. La:vsI Tso>da:h – The Birthday of the Pussy Cat.

The fourteenth day of the dark half of the month of '*Paush,*' or '*Po>h*' was celebrated as the birthday of the pussy cat in the past. On this day the people used to cook the black-beans '*Mash*', known a '*MahI Da:l*' in the Kashmiri language and place the share of the cat in a lonely corner. Now this ritual is no more celebrated and has been forgotten by the people.

39. Khytsi Ma:vas/Khytsri Ma:vas - Oblation to the Yaksha (Kubera).

The fifteenth day of the dark half of the month of '*Paush*' is known as '*Kyhetsi/Khytsri Ma:vas*'. The ritual is performed by the Kashmiri Hindus from very ancient times. The celebration of this late night ritual leads us to the first settlement of the *Aryans* in the valley under the guidance of *Kashyap Rishi.* Prior to their arrival, the valley was inhabited by the *Pisha:chas*, the *Yakshas* and the *Na:gas*. They did not treat the newly arrived people well and a compromise was made under the directions of *Ni:la Na:ga* who advised the *Aryans* to follow some of

the rituals of the original dwellers so as to live in the valley more amicably. One such ritual appears to be the '*Khytsri Ma:vas*' [1]. In this way they adopted a number of rituals of the *Pisha:chas* and *Yakshas* and thus they were allowed to continue their stay in the valley [2]. It is a busy day foı the children because they are generally very fond of hotchpotch prepared on the occasion. Cleaning of the utensils and besmearing of the kitchen and its washing is done early in the morning. Uncrushed beans '*Moong*' is kept for sprouting early in the day. In the evening the hotchpotch is prepared with utmost care and sanctity. A few people prepare non-vegetarian hotchpotch on this occasion. After its proper oblation it is put in an earthen plate and kept at a place outside the house preferably on the boundary wall of the house for the '*Yaksha*'. [3] A red chilli a few pieces of radish and a little pickle is put on it according to the family customs. Some people prepare vegetarian hotchpotch while others cook rice and the black beans for the house-hold animal like cows and the cattle if there are any in that house. After offering it to the *Yaksha*, it is served to the domestic animal along with a few pieces of Radish. The left over from the hotchpotch prepared for the '*Yaksha*' is taken by the members of the family along with pieces of radish and pickle. It is a common belief that the *Yakshas* are set free from this day onwards up to the '*Ti:lI A:Tham*', the eighth day of bright half of the month of '*Phalgun*.' It is believed that the *Yakshas* roam freely in lower regions and have their sway on the whole valley during the winter season from this day onwards.

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[1] Bamzai, P.N.K., *A History of Kashmir*, 2nd. Ed.1973, Ps. 16-17.

[2] Ibid., P. 73.

[3] An attendant employed to guard the gardens and treasures of *Kubera*, who is believed be in charge of the treasures of gods.

40. Shishar SA:nkra:th -(Sankranti)

To Resolve a 'Ka:ngri:' for the manes.

It is the day of performing rites in the memory of our deceased ancestors and is held on the first of *'Magha'* when the sun enters the Zodiac Capricorn according to the solar calendar. Early in the morning, houses are cleaned and washed. The out side area of the house is also cleaned. A line of lime powder mixed with a few grains of seasmum is drawn around the house and in its interior corridors. The month of *Magha* is considered as the middle of the long spell of winter and it is generally severe cold in the valley during this period. People purchase fire pots and other accessories required to fight the cold. Hence a similar feeling must have developed in the mind of the early man in respect of his manes and ancestors. A firepot, rice, flour, walnuts, salt, woollens, spices and cereals are offered to the priest on this day after resolving them in the name of manes. This appears to be a ritual peculiar to the climatic conditions of the valley like the '*Nirjala Ekadeshi*', which is celebrated throughout northern India during the summer month of '*Je'shta*'. It being the '*Sankranti*' of the month of '*Magha*', people make sweetmeats, and puddings and serve it to the neighbours and the family members. The devotees keep a fast and refrain from taking salt.

The fire-pot, commonly known as '*Ka:ngIr*' has deeply been associated with the rites and rituals of the people of the valley. It is generally a close associate of every person, young and old, from the beginning of cold that starts from the month of November and continues beyond March when the spring season sets in. It is because of this very fact that we have some very common riddles about this period, which besides pin pointing the months of cold, explain our attachment towards '*Ka:ngiri*' that helps a common Kashmiri to fight the cold spell. It reads as under:-

MAnjho>r a:v tI Tsa:nDav log Ka:ngre',
Po>h a:v tI To>h bAriv Ka:ngre',
Mag:h a:v tI dra:g Vo>th Ka:ngre',
Pha:gun a:v tI za:gun hyo>tukh Ka:ngre'.

Meaning:

The month of *Maghar,*(Nov./Dec.)is to look for a *Ka:ngari,*
Fill the fire-pot even with the rice-husk, because it is Po>h (December/ January),
It is the month of *Magh* (Jan./Feb.) and the *Ka:ngari* has become scarce,
Its existence becomes suspicious in the month of *Pha:lgun,* (February/March)

This festival appears to have emerged out of the mediation done by *Nila Nag* between the *Pishachas* and the *Aryan* settlers in the valley. The resident *Aryans* believed that the line of lime stone powder and the seasmum seeds, made round the house, stops the entry of the *Yakshas* and *Pishachas* into their residential houses. A similar type of a festival namely '*Lohari*' is celebrated in Jammu province. In the evening a bon fire is lit up and ground nuts and '*Re'waris',* a kind of crisp sesame-candy is offered to it. Thus the people of the planes bid goodbye to the winter season on this day. It is also known as '*Makar*' or '*Til,' Sankranti* in the Indian sub-continent.

41. Shiva Chaturdashi - Meeting of Shiva and Shakti

It is believed that the first meeting between *Shiva* and *Parwati*, took place on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of *Magh* on her second birth in the house of *Himalaya* after she had immolated herself in the *Yajnya* of *Dhaksha Prajapati*. Hence, the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Magh,* are celebrated as *Shiva Chaturdashi* in the whole valley as it is held in other parts of the sub-continent. These three

days are considered as of complete penance and worship and are also named as '*DAham*', - the day of a single meal, '*Ka:h*'-a day of no meals and '*Ba:h*' - again a day of a single meal. The scriptures tell that by observing all the three days as fast-days, all the sins of an individual are washed away provided he refrains from all such sinful acts in future. Cleaning of the house, fasting and giving of alms to the needy and the deserving are the main celebrations on all the three days.

42. RangI Do>y -
The Day of Colours.

In Ancient times the people of the valley prepared images and portraits by using the local flowers and leaves of different colours and shades in place of modern synthetic colours as these were not available during those old days. The bright half of the month of *Magh* was specially dedicated for such prostrate making. All this was done for celebrating and making the portraits of Mother Goddess '*Saraswati*' whose birthday is celebrated the following day. The portrait of goddess '*Saraswati*' made on a sheet of paper contained a couplet written centrally in praise of the goddess. Now due to the fact that the portraits of different gods and goddesses are available in the market at much cheaper rates and also that the ready-made colours are easily available in the market, the handicraft of portrait making has come to an end including the labour involved in making such natural colours. Thus the result is that the importance of this festival has come to an end so much so that only a faint memory of the festival is alive in the minds of a few people now. In this way, the institution of Kashmir Ritual Painting and Portrait Making has come to an end.

43. GorI Tray – The Day Consecrated to the Goddess Saraswati .

It is celebrated on the third day of the bright half of '*Ma:gh*' and is dedicated to goddess *'Shakti'* in the form of *'Saraswati'*. It is also known as '*Gauri Tritiya.*' All the members of the family rise up early in the morning and after cleaning the house and besmearing it, the children wait eagerly for their *Kula Guru* who visits the houses of his devotees with a sheet of paper containing the images of various gods and goddesses with a couplet written in praise of goddess *'Saraswati'* at its center. Images of gods painted on it are generally those of '*Saraswati', 'Lakshmi'* and *'Ganesha'*. In the middle of the sheet of paper it contains a couplet in praise of goddess '*Saraswati*'. The *Puranas* have given much importance to this day and it is said that people used to introduce their children to the alphabet/education on this day. Hence a day dedicated to the goddess *'Saraswati.'*

The other story connected with this day is from the *Shiva Purana.* It is said that. *Dakhshi Prajapati*, the father of *Sati* [1] was not willing to marry his daughter with *Shiva.* But he had to bow before the wishes of his daughter and he had to marry his daughter with *Shiva* out of compulsion. Soon after. he had to leave on an expedition to curb the '*Asuras*'. On his successful return, he performed a big *Hawan* to which he invited all the gods and goddesses except *Shiva.* This action of her father was unbearable for *Sati* who went to her parental house against the wishes of her husband to see the things for her self. Not bearing the insults for her husband from her father, she jumped into the ceremonial fire and immolated herself. On hearing the fate of *Sati* at her parental house, *Shiva* was furious and in his '*Ta:nDava',* dancing posture, he ordered his

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[1] It is one of the names given to *Parwati*, the spouse of Lord Shiva.

'Bairavas' [1], to punish the wicked *Dakhsha* and he himself went into seclusion. In due course of time *Sati* was reborn in the house of *Himalaya* in the form of *Parwati* who did a long penance so as to please Lord *Shiva*, who was much annoyed due to the fact that *Sati* had not taken his advice and had attended the *Yajnya* of *Daksha* against his wishes. It was due to the efforts of gods and the long penance of *Parwati* that *Shiva* was pleased and graced *Parwati* with his presence on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of *Magha,* commonly known as *Shiva Chaturdashi. Himalaya* was very much pleased to accept *Shiva* as his son-in-law. *Na:rada* [2] shuttled as a mediator between the gods, *Shiva*: and *Himalaya*. Finally he was deputed by *Himalaya* to go to *Kailasha* [3] along with *'LagnI Chandrika:'*[4]. The day for the marriage was fixed on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of *Phalgun*, commonly known as *'He 'rath'*. This episode, as contained in the *Shiva Purana* and *Shiva Parinay,* is repeated on the *'Gauri Tritiya'*, commonly known as the *'GorI Tray'* because on this day the *Kula Guru* visits the house of his hosts and presents to them a paper sheet containing the portraits of goddesses *Saraswati, Lakshmi* and Lord *Ganesha.* Children wait for the arrival of the priest very impatiently as it is a day of joy for them. They compare the

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[1] These are terrible and awful companions at the service of Lord Shiva.

[2] He is considered as a messenger of gods and other heavenly bodies and has been bestowed with eternal life by the gods.

[3] It is the abode of Lord *Shiva* in the Himalayas also known as *Kailash Parbat* or *Kailasha,* one of the peaks of the Himalayas.

[4] It is commonly known as *'LagnI Chi:ri'* .It comprises a portrait of a god and his spouse in the *'Jai mala'* posture and the details regarding the position of the heavenly bodies at the auspicious time *'Mahu:rta'*, of marriage and also the names and the *'Gotras'* of the bride and the groom. if available. It also includes the timings for holding different marriage rituals and the number of guests, etc, to accompany the marriage party. The practice of presenting the 'LagnI Chi:ri' is an important function of a marriage among the Kashmiri Pandits and the priest from the bride's side visits the groom's house a few days before the actual date of wedding, along with the portrait.

pictures on their papers with those given to the other children.

Besides, the word '*GorI Tray*' contains one more literal meaning of a picture; a portrait, printed cloth, an image or writing on paper containing more bright/dark colours and in abundance is given this name. A faulty white washing or besmearing profusely or defectively with different bright colours on the walls/paper with clay and water or colours too is named as '*GorI Tray*'.. The ritual of presenting the said portrait on the scheduled date of the year has since ceased with the advent of printing press and the change in our social status.

44. BhishmI A:Tham-
The Anniversary of Bhishma Pitamah.

Bhishama, the famous character of the great epic *Mahabharata*, the grand uncle of the *Kauravas* and *Pandavas* is known in the scriptures as '*Pitamah*' meaning grand father, elder person, who had pledged to remain un-married all his life for the service of *Hastinapur*, the joint kingdom of the *Kauravas* and the *Pandavas*. In the great war of *Mahabharata* he sided with the *Kauravas* due to compulsion as *Dhritarashtra*, the *Kaurav* king was at that time on the throne of *Hastinapur*, also known as Indraprastha. *Bhishma*, as per his promise, had pledged to remain loyal to the ruler though he knew that the king was on the wrong track. Arjuna in the Great War killed him. As he was a bachelor throughout his life, and that there was no body to offer him water after his death, Lord *Krishna* gave him a boon for his long service and dedication to the kingdom when Bhishma himself laid his deathbed in the midst of the battle field because he had got a boon fro his 'wishful' death from *Brahma*. *Krishna* wished that he be given water by all the followers of His faith on the day of his

death as if his own grand children. It is said that he breathed his last on the eighth day of the bright half of the month of *Magh*. So all the followers of Lord *Krishna* offer water to '*Bhishma*' on his death anniversary which falls on the eighth bright half of the month of' *Magh*. His death anniversary remains unchanged and the influence of any change in '*Tithi*', commonly known, as '*Deva Dev*' does not effect the date of his anniversary as contained in our scriptures.

45. Ka:vI Punim (Ma:gI Punim) – A Day Dedicated to the Birds.

The bright fifteenth day of the month of *Magh* is dedicated to the birds particularly, the crow. Hence, the day is called '*Ka:v Punim*'. '*Ka:v* ' is the Kashmiri name for the crow. People get up early in the morning and after cleaning the whole house and the surroundings and besmearing or washing its front corridors, they take a bath and keep a fast for the full day. The devotees take a single meal on this day. The day is also celebrated as the *Magh Purnima* like the rest of the sub-continent. It is a day of attraction for children. They serve rice and vegetables to the crow on a plate woven out of grass and small sticks with a handle called '*Ka:v Po>tul*'.[1] The elders of the house prepare it one each for their children and in the afternoon food is offered to the crow jointly by all the children at the house top and the following folk song is sung on the occasion to invite the crow: -

Ka:v baTtI ka:vo , khe'tsIre' ka:vo,
Ka:v tI kA:vini' sA:ti: hyath,

[1] It is made with the help of two sticks, one short and another long. The short one is kept cross-wise on the long one at its one end and then a rough mat of grass is wound around it. The long end of the stick serves as a handle of the squire shaped mat plate thus formed on which food is served to the crow.

GangA: BalA: [1] *shra:na:h kArith,*
GurTe' me'tse' Tyoka: kArith,
VozIlay pa:Te' yonya:h tshInith,
Wo>lIba: sa:ne' nave' lare',
KanA:dare' vare' batA: khe'ne'.

Translation:

Oh crow, dear crow, Oh hotchpotch loving crow,
(You come) along your spouse.
After taking a bath in the *GangI Bal* Lake,
(You come) with a marking of brown [2] clay on your fore-head,
(You come) wearing a Sacred Thread made out of red cotton, '*NA:rivan*'.
You come to the edge of the roof of our new residential house,
And take your favourite hotchpotch.

While singing the folk song, the stick and the food on it is moved lightly to and fro and at the end of the song the grass plate containing the food is kept gently on the floor. The birds come in large numbers and eat it.

There appear to be some religious directions for our love for the crow. It is because of this very fact that we have a mention of this bird in the *Ramayana* in the form of a conversation between "*Kak Buhsandi*" and others.

The full month of '*Magha*' is considered to be most auspicious of all the months. Some Hindus keep fast for the full month and perform '*DAhAm*' '*KA:shi*', and '*BA:shi*' for the full month. That is they take a single meal

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1 The name of the famous place of pilgrimage *GangIbal* or the *HarI MukaTa Ganga*: as already described under the heading 'GangI A:Tham'.

2 Brown clay is of immense importance in performing religious praxis. Places meant for religious activities are besmeared by the Hindus of Kashmir with this type of clay The scriptures have described the brown clay as the best purifier of all dirt and impurities and the Brahmins have particularly been directed to use it. It is because of all these qualities that the places meant for religious activities are besmeared with this clay only.

on the first and the third day whereas they pass the second day without taking any meals for the full day. They adopt this pattern of fasting for the whole month and earn the blessings of Almighty God. The scriptures have given much importance to this month. Our folk songs too have given a vivid description about the piety of this month in the following words: -

Ma:gI ma:sas yus shra:n sandhya: kari,
LukI hInz nye'ndhya kya:h kari tas
Ta:v Ta:v wo>thi tas tI ka:v be'he's kanI dari,
suy so>ri gari gari Hari Na:ra:n .

Translation:

One who bathes and performs his (morning) rituals in the month of *Magh,*
How can the backbiting by others affect him?
All shall welcome him loudly as if a crow sits on the edge of his housetop.
He alone will always remember '*Hari Narayana* (God).

46. *He'arath, VATUKH* - *Shiva Ratri.-*

Shiva Ratri is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Kashmiri Pandits. The festivities start from the first day of the dark half of the month of '*Phalgun*' and these continue for the full fortnight. This festival has been prevalent in Kashmir and other parts of northern India especially the Himalayan belt since times immemorial [1]. The first eight days are meant for cleaning the house and washing clothes, starting from the first day called '*Huri' O>kdo'*. The word '*Hur'* means the cotton piece of cloth, which is used as a scrub while besmearing the house with brown clay-water mixture. All the fifteen days of the fortnight and the mode of work to be

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[1] Aspects of Religion in Indian Society (Meerat), 1961, *'Hearth'*, by Madan, .N., Ed. By, Vidyarthi.

undertaken on these occasions are contained in the following riddle: -

Akh tI akh Kho>da:ya: , ZI tI zin gyaDIra:,
Trayshkal Du: na: , Tsor ku:nj a:lam.
PA:ntsh gAyi Pa:nDav , She;' tI she' Re'shi:,
Sath za:lI satam , A:Th Huri A:Tham,
Nav tsitIr navam , DAh dya:rI dAhAm,
Ka:h ga:DI ka:h , Va:gIri ba:h,
He'rItsI truva:h , Kra:lI tso>da:h,
Du:ni ma:vas , SozIni o>kdoh,
Wa:h BA:li wa:h tI wa:h BA:li wa:h.

Translation:

First is God Himself. The second is a bunch of faggots,
The third is a three-part walnut. The whole world is four-cornered,
Five were the *Pandavas.* Six are the six Schools of Thought. (which one must endure).[1]
The seven are the seven flames of goddess *Jwala,*[2]
The eighth is the day of besmearing,
Ninth is the day for meditation, (Or the ninth day of the dark fortnight of *Chaitra,* known as *Ram Navami*) .
The tenth is the day for spending money,
The eleventh is the day of feasting on fish,
Twelfth is the day of receiving the messenger, '*Va:gur*'
The thirteenth is day for *Shiva Ratri,*
Fourteenth is the day for the potter and people of other occupations. [3]
The fifteenth is the day of the walnuts.
The first is the day of distribution of {walnuts etc.).
Oh young lady it is an occasion of merrymaking,

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[1] These are the six schools of thought, known as '*ShaD Darshan*'. - 1, *Shikhsha* (Education), 2. *Kalpa* (Thought) 3. *Vyakarana* (Differenciation), 4. *Nirukhta* (Expansion) 5 *Chanda* (Intension} and 6. *Jyotish* (Brilliance).

[2] The scriptures say that goddess *Jawala* has seven tongues. As such the fire god is called '*Safta Jyovha*'

[3] The day is known as '*Sala:m*' in the common Kashmiri language. On this date different members of the society concerned with different professions and occupations visit the houses of the Hindus and receive gratifications.

Oh beautiful one, it is a matter of joy.

The celebrations in the houses start from the very first day. The elder ladies of the house start cleaning and washing the house and clothes after the long spell of winter and children open their small bags containing colourful cowries for a fortnight's celebrations. The same schedule of washing and cleaning continues for the full week.

47. *Huri A:Tham* - **The night of meditation.**

This day is considered as one of the holiest days of this fortnight dedicated to the worship of Mother Goddess '*Ragnya*': On this day thousands of people visit '*Po>khribal*', situated to the east of the Hari Parbat hillock. Here is a small spring and temple of *RA:gnya: Di:vi:*[1] People take sweetmeats and pudding etc., for oblation and the devotees spend the whole night in prayers and worship. The local temples also throng with the local populace.

The ninth day is meant for rest. In the evening or on the tenth day morning women-folk visit the houses of their parents. They generally return to their homes on the same day except in the case of the newly wed that return the next day or on the day of the main function, i.e., *Shiva Ratri*. Every lady is given a fire- pot, a pair of slippers, [2] salt, bread, *ATlho>r,* and *Atlgath* (pocket money) by their parents/ brothers. They return to their houses with all these presents. The newly wed have to bring a number of additional presents for their in-laws in addition to those mentioned above. Generally they brings the following articles in a steel trunk or in a suitcase: -

1. A suit of clothes for her own self and for her husband,

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[1] It is a name given the Mother Goddess.

[2] In the past the newly wed were given wooden slippers, known as 'Khrav' by their parents.

2. Some curd and bakery breads for distribution among the neighbours and relatives of her in-laws.
3. *BatI-Syun*. (Some rice and cash to meet the charges on account of feasting, etc.)
4. *He'rIts KharIch* (cash gratification as a present for her husband, all the children and her youngsters at the in-law's house.

In this way the tenth day is a day of spending for the father of the bride and the day of receiving the gifts for the groom's family. It is probably due to this very reason that the day is called as 'd*ya:rI dAham*', or 'the tenth day of transactions'.

48. Ga:dI Ka:h –
The Day For of preparing the Feast.

The eleventh day is for selecting and purchasing of vegetables, fish etc., for the day of the main function. Women remain busy washing and cleaning all the vegetable etc, and for preparing dishes including fish. In the real sense the cheerfulness of the coming festival starts from this day.

49. Va:gIri Ba:h. _
A Ritual Prior To The Main Function

The root words appear to be, '*Vagesh Dwadashi*' which has taken the changed form of '*Va:gIri Ba:h* in the spoken Kashmiri. The literal meaning of the word' *Vagesh*' is ' *Brihaspati* ', the teacher (*Guru*) of the gods. It also means a person who is an eloquent speaker. In view of the fact that '*Va:gur*' is the deity who arrives a day earlier to inform about *Shiva's* marriage, hence the messenger is called '*Vagesh*' or 'Va:gur'. Besides other shades of meaning, it also means, *Brahma*, the creator of this universe.

On the twelfth day a fresh earthen or a metal bowl is placed on a woven grass ring called, '*A:r*' at the place

hich is earmarked for decorating the '*VaTukh*'[1] next day. The '*Va:gur*', a messenger of the coming deity and his marriage party, is placed at a well besmeared place. The word '*Va:gur*' is no more in use in the present Kashmiri language in the sense of a messenger or otherwise. There is only one proverbial use of the word like, '*Va:gIri BatIni Ga:v*' meaning a person, preferably a lady moving freely, aimlessly and without any worry or restrictions like a stray animal. Here it is used as the nomenclature of a person having such qualities

In the evening freshly prepared rice and vegetables are offered to it as an oblation.

50. Shiva Ra:tri - The Night Dedicated to Lord Shiva .

It is a very busy day for all the family members. Women start cleaning and besmearing the rooms and the place of the '*VaTukh*' from early in the morning. Young people collect/purchase fresh flowers and other scented leaves like the '*Bel*', leaves of the wood apple and '*PatIr,*' etc. and prepare garlands of these flowers and scented leaves called '*VusIri*'. Small and big rings called, '*A:ri*' are made of paddy grass to serve as the seats for the deities. The elderly person/lady of the house observes a fast on this day till the offerings are made to the deity in the evening. The place of the deity, called the '*VaTakh KuTh*' is decorated with flowers, buntings and portraits of different deities. In the mean time the potter comes with a coop of fresh clay pots. The ritual of 'a:*lath*' is performed

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[1] The clay or metal pots and utensils, big and small used collectively for the ritual These include the pitchers (big and medium), and other pots of different shape and size, called the '*VaTukh*' or '*VaTakh Ra:zI*'. The big pitcher represents '*Shakhti/Parwati*', the medium one is considered as '*Shiva*' whereas the other smaller pots are adored as the '*Bhairavas*' a '*Rishi:*' and a point-topped, '*Shivaligam*' shaped pot known as '*Sani Po>tul*' all accompanying the *Barat* of 'Lord ' *Shiva.*'

soon as he reaches at the gate of the house [1]. Here the potter is not to pay anything for his entry into the house instead he gets a handsome gratification from the head of the family at this time [2]. He also gets the cost of the earthen pots that he brings on the next day.

Immediately on the arrival of the pots, the whole situation of the house changes. The pots are decorated with garlands, flowers and scented leaves. The big pitcher and the medium one are filled with walnuts of the best quality. The ladies of the house start their chores in the kitchen preparing all the vegetables/ meat/ fish according to their family customs and traditions. The *'VaTukh'* was previously taken to the river *Vitasta* or to a local stream or spring for washing it and filling it with fresh water. Now taps are fitted in every house so the question of going to the *Vitasta* or to the local streams for the purpose, does not arise. However, in the villages people still take the *'VaTukh'* to the local streams or springs for this purpose. After washing the *'VaTukh'* it is decorated with vermilion and *'NA:rivan'*, garlands, flowers and is kept at the place fixed for it along with other pots according to the family traditions, on the seats of grass-rings. All the members of the family assemble for offering collective prayers to the deity as soon as it is dark in the evening. Video cossets and tapes, containing the *'VaTakh Pu:za'*, are played till late in the night. Some of the devotees wait till the arrival of the priest who performs some of the necessary rituals on the occasion while others do it on their own and after making offerings to the deity according to their own family traditions they complete the function.

The number of utensils used as 'VaTukh' on the occasion, are generally according to ones own family traditions, rituals and customs. Common lists of such

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[1] Due to the change in times, people generally prefer metal pots now. Hence the visit of the potter on this occasion is no more in practice.

[2] He is given some rice, cash gratification and a few walnuts on this occasion.

utensils that generally comprise the '*VaTukh*,'[1] and are adorned and worshipped at this hour are listed as under: -

1. No>t.- (One), A big pitcher made of clay or metal. It represents *Shakhti*: or Mother Goddess. It is filled with walnuts and decorated with flowers and garlands.
2. NA:r- (One), A medium sized pitcher of clay or metal. It represents *Shiva* commonly known '*Ra:mI Go>d'*. This too is filled with walnuts and decorated.with flowers and garlands
3. *Dul* (one) A large bowl-like pot. It represents one of the '*Bhairavas'* among the *Baratis* of *Shiva.* A major portion of the offerings is put into this pot.
4. *Duliji* (one/two), small bowls. These too represent the '*Bhairavas'* accompanying the *Barat*. Offerings are made to them also.
5. *Reshi Pya:lI*, (one), A cup shaped bowl. It represents the *Rishi* accompanying the *Barat.* It is served milk, sugar and a piece of radish, etc., according to ones family rites and customs and it is considered to be a completely vegetarian *Barati*.
6. V*a:ri* (Four) small toy pots. Two of these are called '*Sani Va;ri'* [2] and the remaining two represent the *Baratis*. One walnut in each of these is kept till they are served with the share of the offerings.
7. Small spout pots, called '*Nayi V:ari'* (two.)They too represent members of the marriage party and are given offerings as usual.
8. A stand for burning incense, called '*DupI Zu:r'*
9. An earthen lamp kept burning for all the days of the festival. Oil is used in it for the purpose.

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[1] Walter, Lawrence, R., *The Valley of Kashmir*, 1895, (University Press, London} P.266.

[2] The small two toy pots which are always washed and filled with fresh water every morning and served with a little food cooked for he family, These are considered as the confluence of the holy Ganga and Yamuna. Thus they are the bodyguards for the welfare and prosperity of the family. For details see chapter xvii. , 'Sani Va:ri'.

10. A lamp with a stand called '*Rattan Di:ph*' lighted at the time of offering prayers. Ghee is used in this lamp.
11. A big earthen saucer called, '*Tok*' for kindling charcoal/ fire for making offerings and some small earthen plates called, '*ParvI*' for burning Camphor, etc.
12 *Sani po>tul* .It is a pointed '*Linga:*' type pot with a stand. It is the main item of worship on the occasion. It is worshipped with water, milk, curd and flowers. It has the same place in the *Shiva* worship on this day as is the importance of '*Saligra:m*'[1] in the worship of Lord *Vishnu.*

The word '*Sani Po>tul*' appears to be derived from the Sanskrit words, '*Samridhi Putla*'. While the meaning of the former is wealth, happiness and prosperity, the latter means an 'image' or an 'effigy'. In view of the fact that it is prominently worshipped on this day, it appears that the original words have undergone phonetic change and are pronounced as '*Sani Po>tul*' in the Kashmiri language as is the case with the '*Sani Va:ri*' referred to in the earlier chapters.

Some of the Kashmiri Hindu families remain completely vegetarian for all the days of the festival from the tenth day to the fourteenth day of the fortnight. They are known as "*GurITi*'. These families prepare non-vegetarian dishes on concluding day of the festival; which is also celebrated as '*Du:ni Ma:vas*'.[2] Due to the change is diet by the said class of Kashmiri Pandits, it is also nick-named as '*Dambni Ma:vas*', for they cook the innards of a sheep or goat on the fifteenth day of the dark fortnight of *Phalgun.*

The morning and evening prayers are held in every home on each consecutive day after the night of

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[1] A small round idol of Lord Vishnu.

[2] In case thr Shiv Ratri is held on the twelfth day of the dark half of Phalgun.

Shiva Ra:tri till its final *Pu:ja* or farewell held on the evening of fourth and final evening.

51. He'rtsI Sala:m
Shiva Ra:tri Good Wishes

The next day of the main festival of *Shiva Ra:tri* or the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of *Phalgun*, is celebrated as the '*Sala:m*'. Elderly lady of the house gets up early in the morning and cleans the '*VaTakh KuTh*, known as '*Ma:rzan Dini.*' '*Ma:rzan*' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'cleaning'. There is a great rush of people at the *Shiva* temples. People go there for oblation after bathing and wearing colourful dresses and it has been a practice for centuries in the valley. '*Sala:m*' is an 'Arabic' word generally used by the Muslims when they wish non-Muslims. Friends belonging to other castes, faiths, communities and helpers in our social life, like the blacksmith, the carpenter, the potter, the post-man, the cobbler, the watchman, the lines-man etc., come and receive gratifications from the head of the family as a gesture of good will. In some families arrangements for feasting are made for all these people. The potter, besides the gratifications, gets the price money of the pottery supplied by him and also a few walnuts and some rice. That is why the fourteenth day of this fortnight has been described as the 'Potter's fourteenth" in the folk song already quoted. Children spend the day in playing with the cowries whereas the young spend it in playing various games including cards. The elderly people are busy in greeting guests and friends. All spent the day in merry-making and rejoicing. In the afternoon children gather round their parents, grand parents, uncles and aunts and extract as much money from them as they can in the form of pocket money called '*HayrIts KharIch*'. The children of the family, where a new bride has arrived during the

year of the festival, get a handsome amount of money as '*HayrIts KharIch*' from the parents of the bride at least for the first year which diminishes with years to come and ultimately ceases after a few years.

It may be recalled that '*Shiva Ra:tri*' as a festival is celebrated on this date throughout the sub-continent and there is a national holiday on this date.

52. Du:ni Ma:vas -
The Final Send Off to Shiva Ratri

The fifteenth day of the dark half or the first day of the bright half of the month of *Phalgun,* as the case may be, is a day of the farewell. In the evening small cakes of rice flour, called '*tsho>chi wAri*', are baked. Flowers and garlands used on the night of *Shiva Ra:tri* and on subsequent days, the grass seats of the deities, are collected in a basket and the water contained in the pitchers is poured out into a vessel. All this is immersed into a stream/river/ pond etc. This ritual is known as '*VaTukh Parmu:zun*' or bidding good bye to the deity. A few of the walnuts are broken and their kernels and the cakes made of rice flour are distributed among all as the oblation. From this day onwards walnuts and breads are sent to all the relatives and neighbours. In the present set-up a considerable change has been witnessed in the ritual, known as '*VaTukh Parmu:zun*'. The function is now held in the morning instead of holding it in the evening, perhaps due to paucity of time available with the devotees. But this is not in conformity with the *Dharama Shastra* or even according to our age-old set social traditions. We bid farewell to our daughters after marriage in the evening and not in the morning. That is why night weddings were not in practice in the valley of Kashmir till recently. No doubt, there could be some social or other barriers for not holding such weddings.

During the first year of marriage, a bride takes a large number of walnuts, breads and cash presents for her in-laws, which gradually diminishes as years pass. It is a hectic week for all during which the oblation of walnuts and breads are to be sent to the relatives and friends The activity comes to an end on '*Ti:ll A:Tham*' the eighth day of the bright half of the month of *Phalgun,* the last date fixed for sending and receiving such oblations.

53. Ti:ll A:Tham –
Offering Oil Lamps to the Manes.

The eighth day of the bright half of the month of *Phalgun* is celebrated as '*Ti:ll A:Tham*'. It is also the last date for distribution of walnuts etc., the oblation of the *Shiva Ra:tri* festival because after this date no such oblation is generally distributed.

On this day oil lamps are lit in honour of the manes. Early in the morning the corridors and the front portion of the house is duly washed and cleaned. Rice is cooked with fresh water. The potter arrives with a gift of eight un-burnt earthen lamps. These are placed at a well besmeared place on grass rings called '*A:ri* '. Each lamp is provided with two cotton wicks. One is lit in the morning and the other in the evening. Sesame and oil is burnt in these lamps. In the afternoon cooked rice, sesame, and a red turnip [1] are put before the lamps in the name of our manes. In the evening the lamps are again lit and one lamp each along with the grass ring, is kept in the street, on a heap of garbage, at the river/stream bank, at the cow shed, at the temple, on the front corridor and one each in all other rooms of the house. In the evening

[1] The turnip is resolved in the name of the manes on this date. It is an old belief that its use as a vegetable is not made in a particular year beyond this date after it is resolved on the occasion. There is a riddle in Kashmiri language, namely, '*Phaglnii Gogjan sa:dlyi' kyah*', meaning 'the turnip is a tasteless vegetable after the month of Phalgun sets in.'

children tie up worn out ropes/rags to the outer wicket baskets of the broken firepots and put them on fire. These are revolved round the heads after they catch fire and the following riddle is repeated:-

'Ja TA:n TA:n' 'Ja TA:n TA:n'.

It appears a riddle having originated from the Sanskrit language, *'Jitah Antatah'*, meaning 'we have won in the long run' as the concluding days of winter have set in and by putting the old and worn out 'fire-pots' to flames, we bid good bye to winter and rejoice for the coming spring. It is also said that on this date the rule of the '*Pishachas*' and other aboriginal people of the valley comes to end and they recede to the remote forest areas making way for the *'Aryans'* to reside in the valley as per the agreement arrived at under the chairmanship of *Nila*.

54. Sonth - Advent of Spring

It is celebrated on the first of *Chaitr*, the twelfth month of the *Vikram* era and is commonly known as *'Sonth'*. On the concluding day of *Phalgun*, a '*Tha:l*' full of rice is kept in the bed room. On it is kept, a bread, some salt, walnuts, a pen, an inkpot, milk, a handful of cooked rice, a mirror, a pen, a coin, a bunch of flowers, some blades of green grass and the almanac of the year. On the next day, the first of *Chaitr*, the person, preferably among the small kids in the family who rises up first in the morning shows the '*Tha:l*' to all the members of the family, called '*Buth Wuchun*' and thus becomes entitled to get some more gratifications from the head of the family besides the money which had been placed on the '*Tha:l*' on the previous night. [1] All the members of the family look at all the things put in the '*Tha:l*' when they wake up, considering it as a good omen for the coming spring. Small children are anxious to rise first on this date in the hope of getting gratifications. Till recently people

[1] *Keys to Kashmir, (Lalla Rukh* Publications, Srinagar) 1953, P 80.

used to keep paddy in a big basket. Yellow salty rice was prepared ·from this paddy on some future date after pounding it. Now due to change in times, rice is kept in the '*Tha:l*' and the '*TahA*r' is prepared out of it on the day of the festival .

The final farewell to the winter season is given on this date and preparations are made for the coming spring season. Many people, generally the young couples, children and the youth go for an outing on this occasion. The festivals of '*Ti:lI A:Tham*' and '*Sonth*' seem peculiar to the valley of Kashmir alone. The settlement of the Aryans in the valley seems to be the main reason for both the celebration as festivals of joy and happiness.

55. *Navreh Ma:vas* -

The Concluding Day of the Year.

It is one of the auspicious days which was celebrated at Vicharnag, Srinagar, commonly called '*Vyatsa:r Na:g*' on the fifteenth day of the dark half of the moth of *Chaitr* by the people of the valley till recently. There is a mention in the *Nilmnat Purana* of celebrating this day. It is said that during earlier times the kings of Kashmir would ask all the astrologers and astronomers to assemble at this place and discuss their individual astrological calculations in detail among themselves and thus they arrive at a consensus and unanimous decision for preparing a general or a common calendar, *Panchang*, '*Jantari:*' or '*NyachipAtIr*'. The almanac is called '*NyachipAtIr*' in the common Kashmiri language, which includes a record of the coming year.Hence the deliberations made on the occasion are termed as '*Vichar*' in Sanskrit language, hence, probably the place took the name of '*Vichar Na:g*' or '*Vyatsa:r Nag].*

This day is still celebrated at the said place though the old importance and the grandeur have vanished partly due to the end of the Hindu rule in the valley and partly due to the exodus of the Hindus from Kashmir.

There are two springs at the *Asthapan.* The small one is five –six feet deep and is known as '*Do>dI Po>khIr'* for its water is white like milk. The word '*Po>khar*' is a Sanskrit word and means a small tank of water. This small spring of sweet water is approximately 8'x 8' in area at the water level. The bigger tank known as the *"NagIbal'*, is situated to its west. It has a flight of steps to its south and west sides made of big stone boulder slabs. The standing walls to its east and north are of the same big blocks of stone and a few portions of the smaller black stone slabs are engraved with beautiful figures. To its north is a small recently built temple and to its west is an old stone temple, know as '*BuhIri' Mandar'* which has a small stream flowing at its backside. The banks of the stream are flanked by a number of old ruins and stone slabs which stand a witness to its glorious ancient past. Nearly two hundred meters away, to the north of the temple, is a cluster of ruins on the bank of the stream called, '*Wo>khal Van'*. It appears that it is a changed from of the old Sanskrit word '*Utpal van'* as the great scholar and *Shaiva* philosopher, '*Utpal Dev'* of Kashmir (900-950 A,D.) is reported to have been a resident of this place. To the south of '*Nagbal*' is one more '*Po>khIr'* named '*Mo>khtI Po>khIr'* some 200 meters away. A cluster of old ruins surrounds this area also. It appears to be a changed name from '*Mukhtamulaknaga'* or '*pokhar'* as mentioned in the '*Ti:rtha Sangraha:*' of *Shrivara.*[1] There is a mosque in the vicinity of this spring now.

The west and the south sides of the main spring, '*NagIbal*' contain the steps made of very big lime stone boulder slabs measuring more than six feet long and four by four feet in breadth and height. These continue up to the depth of nearly 50 feet after every four feet forming a

[1] Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Trans. by Stein M.A.,Vol. II. Rep 1979 P 457.

stair made of these big standing slabs continue up to the bottom of the spring. At its bed there appears a single big slab and in its center is a *Shiva lingam*, known locally as the '*Vyatsa:r SA:b*' measuring nearly two feet in high., on a pedestal known as '*Bhadrapitha*' nearly three feet high. There are a number of big, small and very small pieces of beautiful sculptures over a raised platform on the east side of the spring but no body dares to take them out for installation in the temple, as such an act has been prohibited by the deity himself as is believed by the local populace. Water comes gushing out from the north and east side of the spring when it is drained out for cleaning the pond. It is after great persuasion of the social reformers and preaching of the local *Mahant* of the Asthapan that the visitors who visit this place on the day of the pilgrimage or on other general occasions that they pay their reverence to the deity at both the temples now.

A few decades earlier there was no availability of the modern facilities of transport and the devotees visited the famous shrines of *Tulamula* and *Hara Mukata Ganga* on foot. *Vicharnag* was considered as the first meeting and resting place and the people would rest here for the night and chalk out the programme for further advancement of the journey especially in the case of the *Hara Mukuta Ganga* journey.

Till recently thousands of people visited this place on this date and took a bath in the springs for making their new year more joyful. In the evening, a '*Tha:l*' of rice and all those accessories as mentioned on the eve of '*Navreh*' are kept on it along with a new copy of '*Pancha:ng*' or almanac for the new year. On the next day morning known as '*Navreh*', a look at all these things early in the morning, is considered to be a good omen for the coming new year.

Chapter Twelve

Auspicious Days Connected with Farming.

After leaving the lap of mother, the first support was accorded to man by the earth on which he planted his feet and spent his life. In the first instance he spent it in playing and when he grew up, he started thinking and acting on the footsteps of his forefathers. He was grown up now. All his child-hood companions were lost. He lost his grand parents and then parents. Now there was no one to keep him busy, to feed him and to look after his whims and wishes. His eyes turned towards the earth, water and air all around him-so vast, fascinating, charming, changing and still ever lasting. He could hunt on it. He could make his dwelling on it He could produce from it his eatables, cereals, fruit and all those things required for his day-to-day survival. Thus the development of the sense of respect and reverence began to sprout in his mind for the environment around him and the earth was one of the most important elements of it, which caught his attention first. He started adoring it because he knew that his life was incomplete without his environment. He thought about its origin, its changing phases from time to time and the reasons behind all these changes. In this way he attributed the cause of such changes to some deities like *Indra, Agni, Varuna*, etc. which, he thought, were the main cause for making such changes in every thing surrounding him. Thus he consecrated some days of the year for the worship of different deities who brought about one change or the other on the surface of the earth and its atmosphere from time to time. He distributed the twelve months of the year into four main seasons like, the spring, '*Sonth*', the summer, '*Grishim*', the autumn, '*Harud*' and the winter, '*Wandi*'. Not being satisfied with these divisions, he re-organised the year into six seasons as follows: -

No.	Season		Months		
1.	*Basant Ritu,*	From:	*Chaitr*	To	*Baisa:kh.*
2.	*Grishem*	,, ,,	*Je'sht*	,,	*Ashad.*
3.	*Varsha:*	,, ,;	*Shra:van*	,,	*Bha:du:n.*
4.	*Sharad*	,, ,,	*Asu:j*	,,	*Kattak.*
5	*He'mant*	,, ,,	*Maghar*	,,	*Po>h.*
6	*Shishar*	,, ,,	*Ma:gh*	,,	*Pha:lgun.*

All his festivals connected with the environment and the soil revolved round all the seasons listed above. A brief description of some of such festivals, which the early man celebrated, is given below.

1 Basant PA:ntsam -
The Birthday of the Earth.

The birthday of the earth is celebrated on the fifth day of the bright half of the month of *Ma:gh* commonly called '*Basant Panchami:*' Astrologers are of the view that the 'Earth' came into being on this date and also that life started conceiving on it from this date. It is a general belief that it snows in the valley up to the first half of the month of '*Ma:gh*' and from the second fortnight it starts raining, which indicates that the cold season starts receding from this date onwards. The winter rains, considered as the sign of life for the atmosphere around us start from this day. The devotees adore the soil in the form of '*Mother Earth*' and visit various temples. Houses are cleaned and the peasants visit their fields and perform '*Bhumi Pu:jan*' on this day, before starting any work in the fields..

2. Bumsin Ka:h-
Beginning of Life on Earth

This day is celebrated on the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of '*Ma:gh*' and is commonly called '*Bhimsen Ekadashi*'. The people of Kashmir have divided the period of two months and ten days of the severe winter into three phases. The first phase is named as '*Chilai Kala:n*' spread over a period of forty days, '*ChilI Kho>rId*' of twenty days and '*ChilI Bachi*' extending over the concluding ten days. The '*Bumsin Ka:h*' is held when the first phase of the cold season has just ended or is at the verge of its closure, hence a feeling of joy on the expiry of the period of the longest and the intense spell of cold. There are other folk stories connected with this festival. One among them goes like this.

It is said that, '*Bhimsen*', the third among the *Pandavas* was very fond of eating. The *Mahabharata* is full of stories of humorous incidents about his gluttony. One day his mother, '*Kunti*' asked him to observe fasts on the tenth, eleventh and the twelfth day of '*Magha Shukla*'. *Bhima* agreed and on the eleventh day he had to go without any meals according to the set tradition. At the dead of night he felt pangs of hunger un-bearable. But his mother would not give him anything to eat until it was at least daybreak. So he hit upon a plan. The marshland at a considerable distance from the house was full of wild grass. *Bhima* left his house and put the grass on fire. The light of the fire spread all over and he immediately asked his mother to wake up. The mother, not knowing the reality, felt that it was daybreak and she allowed *Bhimsena* to go and break his fast if he so liked. He immediately went to a milkman's house and drank as

much milk as he could to satisfy his hunger. This fact is also contained in the below cited folk song: -

BumIsinas bo>chi lAji' KA:shi hInzi rA:tsIy,
GAtshith tI dyutnay namble' na:r,
Gatshith tI gori hIndi do>d chonI yAtsIy,
Bhagwa:nI cha:ni gAts chu namaska:r.

Translation:

Bhimsena felt the pangs of hunger at the dead of night on *'Ekadashi'* fast.
He went to marshy land and set its grass on fire,
He went to the milkman's house and drank milk to his content
Oh God, all your ways are worth adoration.

Without going into the details whether the folk story is based on facts or not, one thing is clearly indicated that from this date the earth begins to warm up and the '.putting the grass of the marshy land on fire' is an assertion of this idea. It is a general belief among the farmers that the *'tyembIr'*, 'spark' falls on the earth on this date. The illiterate and those living in far off places call it as, *'JambIr'*. If we take its root from the Sanskrit word *'Jam'*, it means 'to conceive' which again indicates the idea of fertility of the earth.

Another story relates that from this date the earthworms get new life after the long spell of winter and they start moving about. This too is an affirmation of the above thought and this much is sure that some changes do take place in the environment from this date. People connected with farming further say that after a pause of ten days from this day, the air and the atmosphere begin to warm-up and after a passage of further ten days more, the water too starts getting warmer and the season begins to change.

All these facts indicate that farming activity begins after ten days from *'Bumsin Ka:h'*. Thus, in this way we are just a few days ahead of 'Sonth' or the beginning of the spring season. It is a period of hectic but

pleasant time of activities for the farmer. He starts sowing of seeds after preparing and ploughing fields and gardens. It is the right season for the horticulturists for grafting and planting saplings of different fruit trees. All these activities involve very little labour but timely action. That is why there is a saying in Kashmiri that *'Sonth chu tsaluk tA Harud chu baluk,'* meaning, 'the spring evolves tricks and the autumn is the time of labour and hard work'.

3. *A:dIr* - The Wet Season.

'Ardra' is a Sanskrit word and means 'Wetness'. It is also the sixth constellation of Lunar Mansions. When the sun enters this 'Nakshetra' while passing through Gemini order (on the seventh day approximately), it is called A:dIr and phenomenal change in season take place. No plantation, grafting or sowing of any kind of seeds is considered feasible after this date in the valley. The sun enters the *'Dakshinayana'* [1] from the date of its entrance into Gemini. No vegetables are watered during this period. If one does so, the whole plantation rots. Bright sunshine is considered better for farming during this period.

4. *VAhra:th* - Onset of the Rainy Season.

On the first of *Shra:van,* the sun enters Cancer sign and in the common Kashmiri language it is known as *'VAhra:th'* or the setting in of the rainy season. The first day of every solar month is known as *'Sankranti'*, and

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[1] The two positions of sun during of a particular year are:- (1) *Uttarayana* The six months' period from 22nd December to 21st June next year, when the sun proceeds towards the North of Equator ilso called the 'Summer Solstice', and (2) *Dakhnayana,* the period of six months from June 21st to December 22nd, when the sun moves to the south of Equator, called, the 'Winter Solstice'.

considered of four types and each type is presumed to have its different climatic effects during the month of its occurrence as per details given below: -

1. *KinA:ri*: - Mixed season of rain and sunlight.
2. *PahA:ri*: - Totally dry climate.
3. *Samandri:* - Totally wet season.
4. *DAriyA:yi*: - Mixed season of rain and sunlight

The occurrence of all these types of *Sankrantis* are determined on the basis of astrological calculations made according to the Zodiac and Lunar position of stars. The strength of the climatic changes including that of the position of rains/sunshine, etc., during a particular month are determined after assessing the type of '*Sankranti:*' falling on the date of a particular month.

5. Shra:vnI Punim -
The Birth of the Cold Season.

The fifteenth day of the bright half of the month of *Shravan* is considered to be the day of the advent of the cold. We celebrate the *Raksha Bandhan* festival and the famous *Amarnath Ji* pilgrimage also is performed on this day. It is a common belief among the people of the valley that the devotees bring cold along with them on their return from the *Amarnath ji* pilgrimage

6. *ZarmI Satam* – Janam AshTami
'The Cold' Attains Youth

The eighth day of the dark half of the moth of *Bhadra* is known as '*ZarmI Satam*' or '*Janam AshTami*'. Besides being celebrated as the birthday of Lord *Krishna*, it is believed that the cold season attains its youth in the valley from this day onwards.

7. *Harud* - Harvesting

On the first of the month of *Asu:j,* the sun enters the sign Virgo of the Zodiac and the season that begins on this day is known as '*Harud,*' in the common Kashmiri language .It is a word derived from the root Sanskrit word '*Sharad*'. On this date yellow salty rice is prepared and taken to the fields full of paddy crops. Here a portion of the *TahAr* is kept on the boundary of the field and the remaining is distributed among all those present there. It is a general belief that the plants, which have grown to their full size till then, bear abundant and ripe grain otherwise not.

8. *Ka:mbIr* - The Fortnight of Manes

Seven days period on the entrance of the sun into the sign Virgo of the Zodiac, are considered as the days of '*Mi:za:n*'. During these days the plants, which have flowered, can bear grain. The '*Ka:mbIri' Pach'*, or the '*Shra:dh'* fortnight, is generally called '*Ka:mbIr'* by the farmers that starts from the first day of the dark fortnight of '*Ashwin'*. The formers are of the view that the effect of (*Ka:mbIr* and *Harud)* is considerable on the paddy crop of a particular year. It is a common belief among them that if "*Ka:mbIr'* comes prior to '*Harud'*, the production of the crop will be low and if '*Harud* ' comes prior to '*Ka:mbIr'*, the yield of the crop will be high. It may be recalled that setting in of the *Harud* is based on the solar calendar whereas the setting in of *KambIr* is based on the lunar calendar. Hence there exists a difference in the occurrence of the two phenomena. The peasants believe that there was once a conversation between the '*Harud'* and the '*Ka:mbIr'*. *Ka:mbIr* said to *Harud,* 'If I come first I shall take a handful of paddy-

grass measure from one *'Lo<ve'* (as much corn-grass as can, be caught between the extended middle fingers and the thumb of the two hands joined together} from the crop of paddy. *Harud* replied that if he came first, he would add that much to the measure of a *'Lo<ve'*. This again confirms that the occurrence of *Ka:mbIr* prior to the inset of *Harud* is not considered good for the paddy crop.

9. *MAnjho>r TAhAr* - Oblation for a Good Crop.

Every farmer spends the full month of *Kartika* in harvesting the crop and then cleaning and storing it properly. During the next month he pounds as much as is required by him for the winter that extends over a period of more than four months. He has also to make provision for his cattle and other animal for all this period. By the end of the month of *Maghar* he is completely free from all this labour. On the concluding day of *Maghar* or on the first of *Po>h* he prepares with utmost care and piety the yellow salty cooked rice so as to pay oblation to the deity associated with the fields where he worked and he named this oblation as, *Manjho>r TAhAr*. The selection for placing the oblation for the deity differs according to ones individual rites and rituals. Generally the devotees rise up early in the morning and make a present of such an oblation to his deity at a place commonly known as *'Ra:zIbal'* or the cremation ground. After paying his salutations to the deity, he visits his fields along with his family and offers the share of oblation to the fields by placing a part of it on its boundary or terrace. The remaining portion is offered to all those who are present at the field at that time including his family members.

10. ChilI - Period of Extreme Cold.

The eighth of *Po>h*, the ninth month of the *Vikram* era, is considered the first of *'ChilI'*. It is believed to be the middle of the winter season there is a common belief with the farmers that the sun enters into a pitcher on the eighth of *Po>h* and remains confined to it till the eighteenth of *Phalgun*. i.e. a period of seventy days. This is a period of snow, ice and chill. This period of two months and ten days has been divided into the following three phases by our ancestors: -

1. *Chilai Kala:n* - (the longest cold spell). The word '*Kala:n'* is a Persian word and it means , 'the longest/biggest one'. It is the period from the eighth of *Po>h* and it continues up to the eighteenth of *Ma:gh*, i.e. for a period of forty days. It is the longest and the coldest period of the winter season.

2. *ChilI Kho>rId* - (Medium cold spell). *Kho>rId* too is originally a Persian word and means the 'younger/ shorter'. It covers the period of the winter from the nineteenth of *Ma:gh* up to the eighth of *Phalgun,* a period of 20 days. This period is less severe than the first one.

3. *ChilI Bachi* (the shortest winter spell) . It is the fag end of winter and it extends over a period of ten days from the ninth of *Phalgun* up to the eighteenth of *Phalgun.* With the end of this specified period, the main winter season generally comes to an end. But at some occasions it has been witnessed that these last ten days prove to be more arduous than the rest and thus make us to remember the words of '*ChilI Bachi,* who is believed to have said, 'Had I been named as *Chalia Kala:sn*, I would have taught the man a good lesson.?'

11. PhrA:vi Punim- Purifying the Atmosphere.

It is one of the oldest practice in Kashmir celebrated on the fifteenth day of the bright half of the month of *Phalgun*. On this day children and even adults come out in the evening into the open places of the village with bundles of grass tied to long sticks to put these on fire. They run along with these torches for long distances and present a charming look when watched from a considerable distance. Till recently, it was not confined to a specific village or areas but the whole valley participated in it and during late hours of night it looked as if torch bearing men are trying to keep away the darkness of the valley. People would go to elevated places to have a look of this beautiful scene.

It may be recalled that people celebrated this festival just to do away with the unusable stored dry grass or hay. It appears that besides the scientific reasons, the following social and historical facts also appear behind these celebrations: -

1. The *Yakshas* and the *Pishachas* had been pushed back into the deep forests on the day of '*Ti:ll A:Tham*' eighth day of the bright half of *Phalgun* according to the agreement reached with the Nil Naga. Hence the area was lit up to express joy.

2.. The wet season and rise in the temperature necessarily becomes a breeding place for all fungus, germs including mosquitoes etc. In order to disinfect and make the atmosphere clean, this practice appears to have been adopted by our ancestors to keep the surroundings more clean by the burning of all leftover and unusable grass, etc., accumulated during the winter season.

It may be added here that the festival of *Zaina Shah Sahab* at Aishmuqam, on the Anantnag, Pahalgam road, also concludes with the process of lighting such torches in the vicinity of that area.

Chapter Thirteen

Sa:th TI Tauhum-

Auspicious Moments and Superstitions.

(a) Auspicious Moments

The word '*Sa:th*' is a derivation from the Sanskrit word, '*Satwik*,' meaning, among other things, goodness, honest, sincere, virtuous or pious. Its Persian origin '*Sat*' meaning 'occasion' also denotes the same shades of meaning. In the whole sub-continent we have the word '*Mahurta*' for it. It is used even in our scriptures and it means a division of time, a lucky moment or a period of one hour and forty-eight minutes. Some consider it a period of 2 *Gharis*, i.e. 48 minutes [1] only. It is a kind of specific timing after taking into consideration the position of all the Planets, Lunar mansions and their entry into a particular Zodiac sign, *Nakshetra*, etc. The Hindus of Kashmir, like their counterparts in the sub-continent, adhere to the '*Sa:th*' very strictly. They wait for months together for undertaking all the auspicious works on the pre-determined auspicious days. Even the *Bhagwad Gita* has laid stress on initiation all the good and important deeds on the auspicious moment of time. [2]

1. Sa:th - Lucky Moments.

Before taking up any work as ordinary as purchasing of some of the things of daily use for the household or as big a function as performing the *Yagnyopavita* or the marriage, the knowledge of the lucky moments/days for initiating such jobs is a pre-requisite. Purchasing of cloth/clothes, oil, utensils or any

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[1] *Vijayshwar Panchang*, No. 319 (2003-04), Ed. Shastri, O.N. , P. 233.

[2] *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita*, Gita Press Gorakhpur, 73rd Ed., year 2002 Adh. 16 . 23-24.

other item of considerable importance like a car, fridge or a TV. etc., require a 'lucky moment' for its purchase. Every lucky moment depends on the following four things: -

1. *Ne'chtur'* *(Nakshetra)* , Lunar mansion,
2. *Wa:r* , The day of the week,
3. *GrIhIdi* *(Griha)* , Position of Planets, and
4. *RA:shi* *(Rashi)* , Lunar/Zodiac signs.

2. *Ne'chtIri'* *(Nakshetras)*- Lunar Mansions.

There are twenty-seven constellations through which the moon moves to make a Lunar month. The moon stays for more than twenty four hours,(24.3 hours) in each constellation and it is called '*Tithi*'. Some times the '*Tithi*' extends over two days, i.e., two consequent sunrises take place during this approximate period of 24.3 hours, and thus extending the number of days in a Lunar month exceptionally to more than 30 days. In case the '*Nakshetra*' is spread over a period of two sunrises, it is either called *Traspak* or the addition of a day. Occasionally two *Nakshetra* make their entry in a single day, it is known as, *Traha* , diminution or loss of a day. A list of '*Nakshatras*' is as follows :-

.No.	Name of the Nakshetra: Kashmiri	Sanskrit	English	Description if any.
1.	*Ashan*	*Ashwani*	Dioscuri	The 1st. Lunar Mansion consisting of three stars.
2.	*Bharan*	*Bharni*	--	The 2nd. Lunar Mansion.
3	*Kratsh*	*Kratika*	Pleiades	The 3rd. ,, consisting of 6 stars.
4.	*Ru:hyan*	*Rohini*	--	The 4th. ,, considered a lightning like cluster of stars.
5	*Mragysho>r*	*Mrigshira*	Orion	The 5th. Lunar Mansion.
6.	*A:dIr*	*Ardra*	--	The 6th. ,, ,,
7.	*Po>narvas*	*Punarvasu*	--	The 7th. ,, ,, A lunar asterism.
8.	*Ashili:sh*	*Ashlish*	--	The 8th. ,, ,, consisting of 5 stars.
9.	*Tyash*	*Tishy*	--	The 9th. ,, ,,

10. *Mag*	*Magha*		-- The 10th. ,,	,,
11. *Puru.:Pha:l-gun*	*Purva Phalguna*		-- The 11th. ,,	,,
12. *Uttar-Phalgun.*	*Uttar Phalguna*		-- The 12th. ,,	,,
13. *TsithIr*	*Chitra*	Gourd	-- The 13th. ,,	;; An Illusion of a number of stars
14. *ZishTa*	*Jishta*	--	-- The 14th. ,,	,,
15. *Swa:t*	*Swati*	--	- The 15th. ,,	,, A bright galaxy of many stars.
16. *Vaishakh*	*Vishakha*	--	The 16th. ,,	,, A single bright star.
17. *AnIra:d*	*Anuradha*	--	The 17th. ,,	,,
18. *Mu:l*	*Mula*	--	The 18th, ,,	,,
19. *Ho>st.*	*Hasta*	--	The 19th. ,,	,, A cluster of stars representing the trunk of an elephant.
20 *Puru:sha:D*	*Purvashada*		-- The 20th. Lunar Mansion.	
21. *Vo>tra:sha:D*	*Uttarashada*		-- The 21st. ,,	,,
22. *Shravan*	*Shravana*		-- The 22nd. ,,	,,
23. *DanishTh*	*Dhanishta*		- The 23^{h}. ,,	,, The Dolphin comprising of 5 stars.
24. *Shatbhi:shak*	*Shrivishta*		--The 24th. ,,	,,
25. *Puru: Bha:-drapada*	*Purva Bhadr-pada.*		- The 25th. ,,	,,
26. *Uttara Bha:drI-pad:*	*Uttar Bhadrapada*		The 26th. ,,	,,
27. *Ri:vath*	*Revati*		- The 27th ,,	,, A combination 32 stars.

Out of these twenty seven [1] Lunar Mansions, the, 4th, 5th, 7th, 9th. 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 17th, 19th, and 27th are considered as favourable Mansions and good for initiating any kind of auspicious work in the family or outside.

According to the Indian astronomy, the path of the moon spreads over all the twenty-seven constellations. That is why; called as the king of the lunar mansions. The orbital moment of moon in every *Nakshetra* is spread as such that it completes its one circumambulation in a

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[1] Some astrologers are of the view that there is one more *Nakshetra* named,' *Abhijita*' raising the total number of the constellations to 28.

month of 30/31 days. These constellations are sub-divided into three categories known as *Dev* (Heavenly), *Manush* (Human) and *Rakshas* (Demon like) . This is further clarified as per details given below:-

<u>*Category (Jati)*</u> <u>*Lunar Mansion.*</u>

1. *Dev* (Heavenly,}*Anuradha, Mrigishira, Shravana, Punarvasu, Revati, Swati, Hasta, Tishaya, and Ashwani.*
2. *Manush* (Human) *Puru Phalgun, ,Puru Bhadra-pad, Uttar-Bhadrapada ,Uttar-Phalgun, Puruashada, Rohini, Bharni, Ardra ,and Uttarashada.*
3. *Rakshas* (Demon-like) *Magha, Ashlisha, Dhanishta, Kritika, Jishta, Shatbhishak, Mu:la, Chitra, and Vishakha*

(b). Tauhum - Superstitions

There are certain lunar mansions, which are considered inauspicious for doing any work or initiating some new job when the moon passes through them. These moments can be categorised under the superstitious beliefs known as, *'Tauhum'* A short account of such clusters is given in the proceeding accounts.

i): DraThIpA:tsuk - (Panchak.)
Five Ominous Lunar Mansions.

It is a combination of five lunar mansions beginning from the second half of *Dhanisht* continuing through *Shatbhshak, Puru-Bhadrapad, Uttar–Bhadrapa* and *Revati Nakshetras.* This period begins when the moon enters the 11th Zodiac sign, i.e. *Kumbha,* (Aquarius). The period comes to an end when the moon enters the *Mi:n* (Pisces/ Fish) Zodiac sign after the end of nearly five days. This period known as *'Panchak',* is considered

inauspicious for performing the last rites of a dead body, washing/cleaning after the death of a family member, proceeding towards south-ward journey, purchasing of pots, utensils, fire wood/timber, oil, iron, clay, cloth/ clothes, washing/cleaning of a bride's hair as a pre-marriage ritual known as '*Mas mutsIrun*'. This period is considered auspicious for all other functions like *Yagnyopavita* or marriage of a son or a daughter.

ii). *KarI PA:ntsuk - Kara Panchak* – The Five Auspicious Mansions.

When the moon passes through the five lunar mansions like, *Hasta, Chitra, Swati, Vishakha, and Anuradha*, it is known as '*KarI PA:ntsuk*' or '*Kara Panchak*' and these moments are considered as most auspicious for starting any sort of work or function .

iii). Mu:l (Mu:la) – The most inauspicious Lunar Mansion.

Out of all the twenty-seven mansions this is considered as most inauspicious *Nakshetra.* It generally starts when the moon enters the ninth Zodiac sign *Dhanu* (Sagittarius) and the *Nakshetra* is *Mu:la*. If a baby is born on this occasion, the parents are not advised to keep it. A baby born on this *Nakshetra* can be inauspicious in a number of ways depending on the time of birth and the part, '*Pa:d*' of this *Nakshetra*: at that time.

The moon passes through this constellation once in a month. The first 48 minutes and the last 48 minutes are considered out side the inauspicious effect of *Mu:la.* The effect of *Mu:la* is thus reduced to 22 hours and 40 minutes approximately which is further subdivided into four *Pa:das* of 5 hours and 40 minutes each. If the baby is born within any of the said four *Pa:das,* it is considered

to be inauspicious, according to the astrological calculations as per details given below: -

1. The first *Pa:da* is inauspicious for the father,
2. The second *Pa:da* is inauspicious for the mother,
3. The third *Pa:da* is inauspicious for the prosperity of the family, and
4. The baby born on the fourth Pa:da is considered auspicious in all respects.

It may be noted that if the first *Papda* is during the night, it is not considered inauspicious for the father and if the second *Pada is* that of the day time then it is not considered inauspicious for the mother.

iv). GanDa:nt and Ashili:sh – Inauspicious Lunar Mansions.

'GanDa:nt' : It is a group of five *Nakshetra:s* namely, *Revati, Ashlish, Jishta, Anuradha,* and *Tishya.* The baby born during these lunar mansions is called as one born on *GanD Mu:l.* The modes of the timings and that of the *Pa:das* are the same as already discussed above.

***'Mu:la** Nakshetra': The* babies born on such inauspicious occasions are to be purified by a special ritual and herbal bath which is to be given to the baby on the same date of the month and on the same *Nakshetra* so as to ward off the bad and inauspicious shadow of this *Nakshetra.*

3. Gruhun - Eclipses.

The word *'Grahan'* means to 'seize' or 'a conjunction of planets. Before giving the scientific explanation of this conjunction, a mention of a story as contained in the *Vishnu Puran*, needs to be kept in mind. The main story revolves round the distribution of Nectar, which had emerged from churning of the Maha *Sagar*, also known as the *'Kshir Sagar'*, by the gods *(Devas)* and the demons *(Asuras)*. *Vishnu* took the form of an enchantress, *'Mohini'* so as to deprive the *Rakshasas* from taking any Nectar and thus becoming immortal. One of the *'Danvas'* disguised himself as a god and took the Nectar. The sun and the moon, considered as the two eyes of the gods, came to know about the trick of the demon. They informed *Vishnu*, who wanted to kill the *Rakshas* by cutting off his head with his disk. In view of the fact that the *Rakshas* had already swallowed the Nectar, he had attained immortality. The upper part of the body of this demon is called *'Rahu'* who swore to seize the sun and the moon, for having informed *Vishnu*. Thus the sun and the moon became life-long enemies of *Rahu*. The lower part of the body of the demon attained the form of a comet, called *'Ketu'*. Thus, the sun and the moon are seized by the demon a number of times in a year. This phenomenon has been named as the *'Grahan,'* or *'Gruhun'* in the common Kashmiri language.

Scientifically, it is simply a phenomenon in which the planets, the sun, the moon and the earth come in a straight line while orbiting the sun that causes shadows. This phenomenon is given the name of eclipse in the scientific terminology. The eclipses are of two kinds: -

1. The solar eclipse, and
2. The lunar eclipse.

a). Siryi Gruhun - The solar eclipse

When the moon comes in between the earth and the sun a portion of the sun or the whole of it is covered by the shadow of the moon. With the result the rays of the sun or part of it do not reach the earth or a particular part of it. It is called the solar eclipse or '*Siryi Gruhun*'. It always takes place on the fifteenth day of the dark half of a month, known as, '*Amawasya*'.

b). TsandramI Gruhun - The lunar eclipse

When the earth comes in between the sun and the moon, the earth stops the rays of the sun to reach the moon. As such, this part of the moon or the whole of it becomes dark. It is called the lunar eclipse or, '*TsandramI Gruhun*'. It always takes place on the fifteenth day of the bright half of a month, called '*Pu:ranma:shi:*'.

The eclipses do not take place on all the bright or the dark fifteenth fortnightlies of the year as the orbital path of moon and the earth is not one and the same i.e., they move on two different paths while revolving round the sun and hence only seldom fall in a line.

It is scientifically admitted that an eclipse causes a few changes in the atmosphere such as, a very slight change in the gravitational pull, tides, and other environmental changes, etc., take place during this period. The early man must have taken these changes in the planetary system more seriously with the result our scriptures contain strong warnings to observe to the following codes of conduct on the occurrence of an eclipse: -

1. To stop eating and drinking at least nine hours prior to the start of the eclipse. This period is known as '*Su:tak*', meaning impurity due to the birth. The

scriptures contain it to be the rebirth of the sun or the moon, as the case may be after passing away the eclipse periods. We consider both the planets as the members of our family whose re-birth after the *Grahan*', is considered as an impurity for that period.

2 To keep a knot of *Kusha*: or '*Darbha:*' in all eatables like, oil, ghee, milk, curd etc., so that these are saved from becoming impure. It is a conception that '*Darbha:*' grass-knots save all these eatables from the bad effect of *'Grahan'*.

3. Pregnant ladies are advised to maintain complete calm and motionless posters during the eclipse periods lest their actions during this period may reflect in the form of deformity in the body- parts of the baby that is in their womb.

4. Every-body has been asked to remain in a meditative mood during the period of the eclipse and attend to the daily routine work only after taking a bath on the expiry of the eclipse. Every body has been asked to give alms to the needy and the deserving on the occasion

It is because of this very fact that pilgrimages are held at a few places like, *Martand,* (Mattan, Anantnag), *Zyawan,* (Pampore), Kashmir, *Purmanaal,* Jammu, *Kurukshetra:,* (Pb.} and *Haridwa:r,* (H.P.) and other places where offerings are made to the manes soon after the expiry of the eclipse.

4. Bunyul - Earthquake

It is a vibration or tremor on the surface of the earth or oin a part of it that generally brings about structural changes on it. This vibration is some times so severe that great damages are caused on the earth's surface besides destructing the human life and property. Because all these changes are beyond the control of man,

he always has taken a very serious note of all the major earthquakes and tremors that have taken place till date. In this way superstitions have developed in the human mind about these earthquakes. A few such superstitions are listed below: -

a) A person is advised not to run about during an earth-quack lest he/she may develop fits. This is not generally done, because every body runs to save his/her life on the occasion.

b). If a man is standing, he is asked to sit down at the time of the quack lest he/she should tumble down and develop fits. But this has not been scientifically proved.

c). When the quack passes peacefully, the residents of the house are advised to sprinkle a little water and a few grains of rice at the front main entrance of the house. It is thought that the manes remain disturbed due to the quack until these offerings are made to them.

5. *MalImas, Bha:numa:s (Ma:sa:dhik)*
Addition of a Month

According to the astronomical calculations the difference between the solar and the lunar calendar is nearly 10 days in a year and these accumulate to one month, which is added to the lunar year after the expiry of every three years to synchronize it with the solar year. It is known as the additional month or '*Ma:sa:dhik.*' This makes the lunar calendar to coincide with the solar calendar. Besides, non-occurrence of '*Sankranti*' in a period of two fortnights of a lunar month makes such an addition necessary. The first 30 days of such addition is called '*MalIma:s*' and the latter period of 30 days is called as '*Bha:numa:s*'. We can say that it is the 'Leap Year' of the '*Saftarshi Samvat*', or the Hindu Lunar

Calendar. In fact the people of the valley were divided into two traditional sects. One such sect was known as '*MulIma:si:*' or '*MalImA:si*', the aboriginals who had not fled during the period of political turbulences. The others were named as '*Bha:numasi:*' or '*Ba:nImA:si*' the people who had returned from the land of the sun i.e. India, after the times in the valley became conducive to their return. The festivals and the celebrations falling during this period were observed according to the calendar adopted by the particular sect of people. That is why the Hindus of the valley observed some of their festivals on two different days or occasionally in two different months. However, with the advent and development of new ideas in the society and due to the preaching of the religious leaders and social workers, this division in the society is now considered meaningless, more so after the exodus of the Hindus from the valley of Kashmir.

The full month of '*Ma:sa:dhik*' is consecrated to the manes and the scriptures direct us to perform the *Shra:dh* ceremony of the manes at the famous '*Surya Tirtha*', Mattan, or '*Ma:rtand,*' at Anantnag, Kashmir. The name of the word '*Ma:rtand*' suggest to an old *Pauranic* legend of '*Mritand*' or the life-less thirteenth son of *Aditi,* the wife of *Kashyapa* as contained in the '*Tirtha Sangraha*' and the '*Martand Mahatamya*'. With the boon from *Kashyapa,* the life-less mass took the form of sun. When there is the non-occurrence of *Sankranti* during a lunar month, the additional thirteenth month of the year is consecrated to the thirteenth son of *Aditi* also called '*Bhanu*'. As such the said leap month is called '*Bha:numa:s*' It is because of this *Pauranic* legend that thousands of Hindus from all parts of the continent perform pilgrimage to this *Tirtha* during this period, especially on Sundays, called '*Raviwar,*' the day attributed to the sun.

This period of one month is considered inauspicious for taking up any new assignment including

functions like, marriage, *Yagnyopavita* and all major purchases like a car, land, a house or the establishment of any new business/venture.

6. Wa: r - The Days of a Week.

The seven days of a week are:-

1. *TsAndIrwa:r* - *Somwar* - Monday,
2. *Bomwa:r* - *Mangalwar* - Tuesday,
3. *Bo>dwa:r* - *Budhwar* - Wednesday,
4. *Braswa:r* - *Guruwar* - Thursday,
5. *Sho>kurwa:r* - *Bharghawar* - Friday,
6. *BaTIwa:r* - *Shaniwar* - Saturday, and
7. a:*thaw:r* - *Raviwar* - Sunday.

Out of all the seven days, the second and the sixth one are considered inauspicious for initiating certain activities whereas the first, third, fifth are considered as the most auspicious days. The fourth and the seventh are considered as partly auspicious days. A short sketch of all these days is given below: -

1. TAnsdIrwa:r (Somwar) - Monday.

The prefix in all the above three nomenclatures refer to the 'moon', holding the position of a 'Minister' in the kingdom of planets according to the astrologers. This day is dedicated to the 'moon'. As the character and impact of moon is considered to be cool, the jobs, which require full sunshine like sowing of seeds or harvesting, are not, generally, taken up on this date. If Monday falls on fifteenth day of the dark half of a month, the day is called, '*Sumri: Ma:vas*', '*Soma Amawasi*' or '*Somwati Amawasya*' and according to the scriptures it is considered one of the most auspicious days dedicated to the worship of Lord *Shiva* bearing the crescent in his

tress. People perform the pilgrimage to a number of places like, Su:mya:r (Srinagar) , Purmandal,(Jammu.), Haridwar,(H.P.) etc. and get the blessings of the deities after paying their reverence to them.

2. Bomwa:r, (Mangalwar) - **Tuesday.**

Mars is called '*Bhom*' or '*Mangal*'. Mars is the planet closest to the earth. It is also known as the red planet. Tuesday is attributed to this planet. Mars is considered as the "Commander-in-chief" of all the heavenly bodies as believed by the astrologers It is also considered malefic in nature. Initiation of any new job on this day is avoided. Some devotees attribute the day to *Hanumana* and visit the temples of this deity on this day to get his blessings. To wave off the evil effect, if any, of this planet in the Zodiac configuration in the horoscope of a person, yellow salty rice is made on this day and fed to birds and animals early in the morning.

3. Bo>dwa:r , (Budhawar) - **Wednesday.**

This day is attributed to the Mercury, considered the Finance Minister of the heavenly kingdom as believed by the astrologers. It is the most auspicious day of the week for undertaking all types of jobs. When it falls on the fifteenth day of the bright half of a month it is known as '*Buddha Purnima*' and when the eighth day of bright half of a month falls on Wednesday, it is called as the '*Buddha Ashtami*' and is revered as the most auspicious day dedicated to the worship of Mother goddess. People go to various places of pilgrimages on these days and receive the blessings of their deities

4. *Braswa:r*, *(Guruwar)* - **Thursday.**

The astrologers consider Jupiter to be the *Guru* or teacher of gods. Besides calling him '*Guru*', he is also known by the names of '*Brihaspati*', '*Brihaspath*' and '*Zi:va:*'. Hence the day dedicated to him is known as *Guruwa:r*, *Braswa:r*, *Birwa:r*, or *Vi:rwa:r*. The scriptures consider it as an auspicious day but the 'Ladies *Dharma Shastra*:' known as '*Zna:nI ShastIr*'[1] has made this day partly ominous though there is no scriptural or documentary proof for such a belief. Thus the initiation of any new function is not undertaken on this day. A special mention of '*Brihaspati*' is contained in our folk songs that are sung on the special occasions of '*Yagnyopavita*' and marriages.

5. *Sho>kurwa:r*, *(Shukrawar)* - **Friday.**

Venus, '*Shukracharya*' is considered to be the *Guru* or teacher of the '*Asuras*' as contained in the astrological studies. In the scriptures his name is given as '*Shukra*', the one eyed, evil-minded companion of the heavenly bodies. He is considered to be an enemy of gods but a friend of the human beings. This day is considered as one among the most auspicious days of the week so all new jobs are undertaken. Some people observe fast on this day and abstain from taking any salt and sour things so as to please this heavenly body and some devotees dedicate the day to '*Sain Baba*'.

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[1] The beliefs based on long traditions and superstitions with out having any written proof but commonly followed and patterned by the women folk of the valley is known in the common language as '*Ladies Dharma Sha:stra*'. It is believed as the '*fifth Veda*' due to its strong grip on the society of Kashmiri Pandits.

6 . *BaTIwa:r, (Shanashcharwa:r/ Shaniwa:r)*- **Saturday.**

This day is attributed to the planet Saturn, considered as the 'prince' (*'Ra:j Kumar')* of the heavenly bodies according to the astrologers. The day is considered auspicious for giving alms especially oil to the needy. People cook yellow salty rice and offer the same to birds and deities and take oblation. No fresh work or purchase of items like iron, steel or oils, etc., is made on this day.

7. *a:thaw:r* , *(Raviwar)* - **Sunday.**

This day is attributed to the Sun, the king of all planets in the solar system according to the astrological studies. Till recently it was revered as an auspicious day and eating of meat, cutting of nails/hair and even shaving was avoided on this day out of reverence. Now beliefs have changed and so have changed customs. It is now treated like any other day of the week. It is considered as the most auspicious day for initiating any new jobs etc., in case the day is free from the influence of any other inauspicious lunar mansions. The horal moments like, '*Vijay Saftami*' generally take place on Sundays whereas the ritual like '*Vinayak tso>ram*' falling on a Sunday, is considered as the most auspicious day for celebrating the ritual of preparing the sweet puddings, known as *RoTh*.

Chapter Fourteen

Grah Mandal - Our Planets

Mahu:rat or *Sa:th* means a division of time, '*Hora*,' a period of one hour and forty eight minutes or a lucky moment. Before initiating any work of considerable importance, the '*Mahu:rat*' or '*Sa:th*' for initiating the work is got determined through an astrologer. It is because of this very fact that the '*Mahu:rtak*' is a synonym for an astrologer. The auspicious moment is determined after taking into consideration the day, the position of the lunar mansions and the position of the sun, the moon, and other planets in the Zodiac signs.

1. *GrIhIdi, (Griha)* - Planets in our Solar System.

The great preponders of Indian astrology have defined the earth as '*Bhugol*.' The very nomenclature of the word perceives that our scholars have been of the view that the earth is round and that this fact they knew from the very beginning. Perhaps there is not such a name given to the earth in any of the world languages. The earth has been described as '*Bhu*' in the *Rgveda*, the most ancient and authentic written document of India. Even our '*Gayatri Mantra*', the soul of the Indian ethos, starts with the words '*Om Bhu*'. The word '*gol*' has the root word '*Go*' in Sanskrit, which means 'move' [1] or 'moving'. Thus the word, '*Bhugol*' means 'a moving ball' which is the accurate and appropriate definition of the 'Earth'. This is a confirmation that this idea about the earth was given to the world by the East. .[2]

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[1] 'Gachati iti, ' Go' Anything which is moving (Nirukhta)

[2] Shastri, Swami Ramanand, *Trikal Jyotish* (Ed. By.Jyotshi Hira Lal Pandit,) Aligrah, 1931, P.3.

Some ancient astrologers considered that the earth is stationary and the sun revolves round it while others were of the view that the number of planets in our galaxy is. unlimited. [1] However, the confirmed list of main planets excluding earth, is six. The moon is considered to be as a satellite of the earth circumambulating round it, and both revolving round the sun as well. In addition to these, two known nodes or shadow-planets (*Rahu:* and *Ketu:*), as they are called, raise this list to nine excluding the earth, when added as per details given below: -

S. No.	Name of the planet			Position	Distance from sun
1.	*Siryi*	*Surya*	Sun	King	--
2.	*TsAndraml*	*Chandrama*	Moon	Minister	9.72 crore miles
3.	*Bom*	*Mangal*	Mars	Army Chief.	13.02 " "
4.	*Bo>d*	*Buddha*	Mercury	Finance.	3.69 " "
5	*Brihaspat*	*Brihaspati*	Jupiter	Priest of gods	27.06 " "
6.	*Sho>kur*	*Shukra*	Venus	Priest of *Asuras*	9. 06 " "
7.	*Shanashchar*	*Shani*	Saturn	Prince	78.02 " "
8.	*Ra:h*	*Rahu*	Uranus	Low cast star	--
9 .	*Ki:th*	*Ketu*	Neptune	A Comet	--

The planets have neither good nor bad effects. It is with their configuration with the zodiac signs that they have their impact, whether good or bad, on various aspects of the earth. The zodiac signs are twelve in number and are differentiated as *'LagIn'* as per calculations based on the position of sun in a particular solar month and the *'Ra:shi'* is determined on the calculations based on the position of moon in a particular *Nakshetra*. *Lagan* or *'LagIn'* actually means the rising zodiac sign above the horizon or the entrance of sun into the zodiac sign at a particular time. The position of

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[1] Shastri, Swami Ramanand, *Trikala Jyotish* (Ed. By .Jyotshi Hira Lal Pandit,) Aligrah , 1931, P.5.

sun at a particular time in a particular zodiac sign is called the '*LagIn*' of that moment. The position of the moon in the zodiac signs at a particular time is called the *Ra:shi* of that particular moment. Thus are calculated the *Lagan* and the *Rashi* of a child at the time of his/her birth. The twelve zodiac signs are as follows: -

S. No	Name of the Rashi[1]		No:	Sign.	Lagan	Relation/Particulars
1.	*Mesha*	Aries	Ist.	Ram.	1.	Self, grand parents.
2.	*Vresha*	Taurus	2nd.	Bull	2.	Property, in-laws.
3.	*Mithuna*	Gemini	3rd.	Twins	3.	Fame,Bros., sisters.
4.	*Karkata*	Cancer	4th	Crab	4	Wealth, Prop, mother.
5.	*Singha*	Leo	5th	Lion.	5.	Education/progeny.
6.	*Kanya*	Virgo	6th.	Virgin	6.	Health, enemy, uncles and aunts.
7.	*Tula*	Libra	7th.	A balance	7	Wife, Bros. Sisters/ Progeny.
8.	*Vrishchak*	Scorpio.	8th.	Scorpion	8.	Servants & in-laws
9	*Dhanu*	Sagittarius	9th	Archer	9.	Fate & grand children.
10.	*Makar*	Capricornus	10th.	Goat.	10.	Father, office.
11.	*Kumbha*	Aquarius	11th.	Water bearer	11	Sons/daughters-in-law
12.	*Mina*	Pisces	12th.	Fish	12	Grand mother, brothers

[1] The Kashmiri versions of all the Ra:shi:s is :- 1.*Mi:sh*, 2. *Vre'sh*, 3. *Me'than*. 4. *KarkaT*, 5. *Siham*, 6. *Kani'*, 7. *To<l*, 8. *vre'chak*, 9. *Dhan*, 10. *Makar*, 11. *Ko>mbh*, and 12. *Mi:n*.

2. The Planets and their effect in various Zodiac positions.

1. Surya .(Su:*raj*) *'Siryi'* - the Sun.

The sun is called the king of the solar system according to the astrologers. It revolves round on its own axis in 25 days. It is 1.55 million km away from the earth and its diameter is 1.44 million km. It is 13.80 hundred thousand times bigger than the earth and is 3.30 hundred thousand times heavier in weight than it. The light of the sun reaches the earth in 8 minutes, approximately. Its circumference is 100 times more than that of the earth. It drifts away 32 km from its axis in a second, which is an indication that this too is revolving round some other heavenly body. It is the source of life for all the living and non-living things on this earth. That is why people have adored it from times immemorial. It has a great impact on all the living and non-living things on this earth.

The 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 11th, and 12th positions of the sun in the zodiac table are considered auspicious. It remains in a zodiac sign for a period of one month and in this way it completes its journey in all the 12 zodiac signs in one year.

1. *TsandramI/TsandIr, Zu:n -Chandrama,* The Moon.

The astrologers consider Moon as the Minister in our solar kingdom. Its diameter is 3,600 km and its circumference is 11,300 km. It is 3.98 hundred thousand km. away from the earth and 1.55 hundred million km away from the sun. It moves at a speed of 3,633 km per hour on its orbit round the earth. It completes one orbit round the earth in 27 days 8 hours and 48 minutes and, as

such, it is also called the satellite of the earth. Astrologers are of the view that it controls the mind of all the living beings on this earth because the very first sight of it fills the mind with joy and happiness.

The 2nd · 3rd · 4th , 5th, 7th, 9th, 10th , and 11th, positions of the moon in the zodiac table are considered good and auspicious. It remains in a zodiac sign for 2.5 days approximately and in this way it completes all the twelve zodiac signs in one month.

3. Bom , Mangal - Mars.

It has two satellites and is nearly 2.37 hundred million km away from the sun. Its diameter is 7050 km. Its circumference is 1.73 Million km and it completes one rotation on its axis in 24.30 hours i.e. nearly equal to that of the earth. It completes one revolution round the sun in 687 days It revolves at a speed of 25 km per second. It is also called the son of the earth and as the Chief of the Army staff of the gods according to the astrologers. It is considered as a malefic planet.

The 1st, 3rd, 6h, 9th and 10th, Mars in the zodiac chart is considered auspicious. A person having Mars in the first, fourth, seventh eighth and twelfth positions of the birth chart, is considered as '*Mangli*' The seventh position of the Mars in the birth chart is considered as '*Mangli*' of the first order. A boy having such positions of the Mars in his birth-chart should have a matching zodiac position of Mars in the chart of the girl for deciding/ finalizing the marriage of the two. No doubt, there are certain exceptions after considering the positions of other stars in the birth-charts of such couples.

4. *Bo>d, Buddha* - Mercury.

It is closer to the sun than the earth and is having a diameter of 5000 km and is 60 million km away from the sun. That is why we cannot see it during night. It is the smallest known planet in our solar system. It completes its one circulation round the sun in 88 days. The nights and days of this planet resemble to that of the nights and days of the earth. It revolves on its axis in 24 hours and five minutes at a speed of 50 km per second. It is a planet of dual-character. When it is in conjunction with Jupiter and Moon in a zodiac chart, it is considered auspicious, when it comes into contact with the Sun and Mars, it is considered cruel in character and when it accompanies Saturn, *Ra:hu* or *Ke'tu*, it becomes inauspicious. According to the astrologers it is considered in charge of the financial matters among the heavenly bodies.

Mercury in the 6th position of the Zodiac chart is considered inauspicious.

5. *Brihaspat (Jiva/ Zi:va:) Brihaspati*, Jupiter.

This planet is considered as the priest of gods. Its diameter is 1.48 million km and is 805 million km away from the sun. Due to its distance from the sun and its long orbit it completes one round of the sun in twelve years and completes all the twelve zodiac signs during this period, i.e., it stays in one zodiac sign for one year. It completes one full round on its axis in nearly 10 hours. It is the largest known planet and approximately 830 million km away from the earth. It has twelve satellites. Ancient Indian astronomers are of the view that it completes its one orbit of the sun not in 12 but in 13 years and in this way it stays in one zodiac sign for 13 months due to its forward and retrograde motions during various intervals.

The 2^{nd}, 3^{rd}, 6^{th}, and 8^{th} positions of Jupiter in the zodiac table are considered inauspicious.

6. Sho>kur , Shukra, - **Venus.**

Its diameter is 12,800 km and it is 112 million km away from the sun. It comes very close to the earth once in a year and at that time it is only 3.67 million km away from the earth. It completes one revolution on its axis in 18.75 days and completes its one revolution round the sun in 225 days through all the zodiac signs. It is the most brilliant planet of our galaxy without any satellites. The astrologers consider it as the priest of the *Asuras* (Demons).

It is considered auspicious in each zodiac sign of the birth-chart.

7. Shanashchar, Shani - **Saturn.**

The diameter of this planet is 120 hundred thousand km and it is two thousand forty eight hundred million km away from the sun. It is considered as the slowest planet, that is why it is called '*Shanashchar*', (slow going). It takes thirty years to make one round of the sun and all the 12 zodiac signs. It completes one round on its axis in 36 hours. It has 10 satellites, but ancient Indian scholars were of the opinion that only eight satellites revolved round it. It is considered as the Prince *(Ra:j Putra)* among the heavenly bodies.

The 3^{rd}., 6^{th}. 7^{th}. 10^{th}. and 11^{th}. Saturn is considered auspicious in the birth chart.

8. Ra:h, Rahu, _ **Dragon's Head, and**
9. Ki:th, Ketu, - **Dragon's Tail.**

Astrologers consider them as shadowy planets. According to them they form the North and the South

nodes of the earth. Both of these travel in the opposite directions of one another and complete the zodiac path in 19 years and thus remain in each zodiac sing for a period of 19 months. Of the two *Ra:hu* is considered as the main planet. The astrologers consider it as the mythological dragon's head, which devours the sun and the moon at the time of their eclipse, whereas *Ketu* is considered a meteor or a blazing star.

Astrologers are also of the view that *Ra:hu* protects its own sign in the zodiac table i.e. it saves the zodiac sign in which it is stationed but strikes the apposite zodiac sign or the planet stationed in that sign. If it is in an ominous house it changes it into auspicious one and if it is in an auspicious house, it changes it into an ominous position.

The 6th , 9th , and 11th positions of *Ra:hu,* in the zodiac table in a birth-chart are considered auspicious positions.

Ketu is reported to be the killer of its own sign in the zodiac chart but it is considered as the savior of the signs and the planets, which fall on its opposite side. If it is at a favourable place in the zodiac chart, it turns to be evil and if there is a planet in opposition, which is ominous, it changes it into an auspicious one.

The 9th ,10th, 11th and 12th , positions of *Ketu* in the zodiac table are considered auspicious.

10. *Pre'thivi:, Zameen, Bhu:* - Earth.

The mass of the earth is five thousand nine hundred and seventy four trillion tones. The surface area of the earth is five hundred nine million three hundred and ten thousand square kilometers. The surface of the earth mainly comprises water and landmass. 29 % of it, i.e., 148 million sq. km., comprises the landmass whereas 71 % of it, i.e., 362 million sq. km., comprises water. It is 1.55 hundred million km. away from the sun. Its diameter

is 13,333 km. and its circumference is measured at 41,667 km. It completes its revolution round the sun in 365 days. The scriptures consider that the moment of earth is totally governed by the sun and, as such, seen from this point of view, the sun remains in each of its zodiac sign for a period of 30.40 days and thus are formed the 12 months of a solar year on earth and it completes one revolution round the sun within this period. It rotates on its axis in approximately 24 hours making a day and a night.

Chapter Fifteen

(A) Nishi:d Sa:th , Ko>sa:th – Ominous Moments.

'Nishi:d' is a word from the Sanskrit language and means, 'forbidden' 'prohibited', etc. Inauspicious planetary positions in the zodiac chart, un-favourable days of the week and forbidden lunar mansions collectively make a particular fraction of time as an inauspicious occasion for doing a particular job. Besides, the lunar mansions falling under the '*DraThIpA:ntsuk*', or '*MalIma:s/Banuma:s*,' cancellation or setting in of a planet, called '*Ast*'', entrance of the sun into the 'Leo' zodiac sign known as '*SyangI*', the mansions like, '*mu:l'* and '*GanDa:nt'*, some of the months of the year, like, '*JeyshTha*,' the fifteen days of '*Pitri Paksha*' the month of '*Paush*' the dark half of the month of '*Chaitra'* and some of the days of the fortnightlies like '*Amawasya'* or *'Sankranti', 'Ma:sa:nt',* the first and the last days of a month and '*Traha*', are considered ominous for taking up any ~~new job.~~ The details are as follows:-

1. ZyuTh, Je'shta *(Je'Th)* - First Born and Born in Je'shta.

Je'Th, Zisht and *ZyuTh* mean the 'elder' or to be more accurate, the first born (son or daughter), besides it depicts the third month of *Vikram* era in the Sanskrit and Kashmiri languages. The marriage of a boy and a girl, born in the month of *Je'shta,* on the '*Zisht Nakshetra'* and being the first issues of their parents, cannot be celebrated in the month of *Je'th,* the third month of *Vikram* era, because that would mean the assemblage of three '*ZiThi*' or 'elders' which is considered inauspicious astrologically. The number should not exceed two out of the three configurations. However, this theory is not

applicable in case of the *Yagnyopavita* where boy/s can be invested with the Holy Thread collectively in the month of *'Je'shta'* and on *Jishta Nakshetra'* even though they are the first born of three separate parents like the three cousins, essentially from the same *'Gotra:'*

2. *Traha: and Traspak* – Diminution or addition of a Day.

When an intercalary lunar mansion begins and ends prior to the rising of the sun, it is named as '*Traha:*' and the loss or absorption of the *'Tithi'* takes place.

In case a lunar mansion continues for two days i.e. from one sunrise beyond the other sunrise, a day (*Tithi)* is added to the lunar fortnight. It is called the '*Traspak*' or addition of a day. According to our astrological accounts, if the 'addition' of a lunar day is associated with any of the inauspicious days, like a Sunday, Tuesday or a Saturday, the initiation of any important and fresh work on such days is avoided. In case it is combined with the auspicious days, like Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, it is considered as most auspicious. No fresh work of any considerable importance is taken up in case of 'absorption ' of a '*Tthi*', called, '*Traha:*'

3. *Ma:sa:nt* - The Last Day of a Solar Month,
4. *SA:nkra:th, Sankranti* - The First Day of a Solar month.

The last day of a Solar month is called *Ma:sa:nt* and the first day is called the '*Sankrati*'. Both these last for complete 24 hours each. Initiation of any new important work is strictly forbidden, especially on the occasion of '*Ma:sa:nt*'.

5. Sa:DI SAti', (Shani Dasha:) -
The Stay of Saturn in a Zodiac Sign.

Saturn is one of the farthest planets from the sun and its orbit is considerably long. It travels from one zodiac sign to the other in a period of 30 months. In this way it completes its one revolution around the sun in thirty years. During its passage its influence is on three houses of the birth chart, one is the moon sign in which it is stationed, the second is the sign from where it has moved into the present sign and the third is the sign in which it is going to move after a laps of 30 months. In this way the sum of the time spent by it and its impact on a particular sign works out to seven and a half years, which in the astrological language is called '*Sa:DI SAti'*, or '*Shani Dasha.*' The time span of two and a half years counted or added three times are also called the three steps of this ominous planet. On the whole this period is considered to be an inauspicious period though it contains some short intervals from time to time when this planet comes into contact with some other favourable planetary influences and proves auspicious for those short periods.

6. Daya: -
Impact of Saturn on other Zodiac signs of the table.

The impact of Saturn remains on a zodiac signs for a period of seven and a half years as already discussed under the title *'Shani Dasha:'*. This period of seven and a half years extends over three zodiac signs for a period of two and a half years each. This period of thirty months in a particular moon sign where the Saturn is stationed influence 4th, 8th, and 10th house of the birth chart and it is called *'Daya:'*. The word *'Daya:'* is derived from the word *'Dayi'* meaning two and a half. This period of thirty

months (two and a half years} is having both auspicious and inauspicious effect on a person having '*Daya:*' according to the impact and influence of other planetary positions. But on the whole it is considered as the most ominous time for the persons whose zodiac signs falls under this influence.

7. *Gruhun* - Grahan, Eclipse.

There are two types of eclipses '*Grahan*'. One is that of the moon and the other is of the sun. Every year at least two such occasions come when the sun and the moon get eclipsed. The solar eclipse takes place on the last day of the dark half of a lunar month called, '*Amawasya*'. The lunar eclipse takes place on the fifteenth day of the bright half of the lunar month called, '*Purnima*'. It is a planetary phenomenon in which total or partial disappearance of a heavenly bodies take place by interposition of another planet between the sun and the moon or earth as the case may be and the sun or the moon pass into its shadow. In the case of the solar eclipse, the earth comes in between the sun and the moon. This causes a shadow on the earth because the moon hides a portion of the sun causing solar eclipse. Contrary to this when the earth comes in between the sun and the moon, the rays of the sun do not reach to the moon and as such a shadow of the earth falls on the moon making it either wholly or partly dark. It is known as the lunar eclipse. Generally the eclipses can be classified under the following three categories: -

1. *Kha-gra:s* - Total solar or lunar eclipse,
2. *Khand gra:s*- Partial solar or lunar eclipse,.
3. *Kank-gra:s* - Ring formation of solar/lunar eclipse.

Our scriptures give much importance to this phenomenon. People go to the *Surya Tirthas* like, Mattan

(Martand), Anantnag, and Zyawan (near Pampore), Srinagar (Kashmir) and take bath in the holy springs and make offerings to their manes after the expiry of the solar eclipse. A great pilgrimage to the famous '*Surya Tirtha*' located at 'Kurukshetra' is held on the eve of the solar eclipse. People keep a fast on this day. The scriptures do not allow any person to eat any thing during the period of the eclipse. People stop all kind of eating and drinking much earlier than the actual time of the eclipse called the '*Sutak*'. It is a conception that all the cooked /baked/fried eatables become impure due to the influence of the eclipse. Actually the Indian thinkers and astrologers considered the sun and the moon as the planets of our galaxy and hence the members of our environment/ family. We consider it as rebirth of both these planets after they are devoured by the demon called '*Ra:hu*'. A knot of '*Darbha*:' grass is kept in the containers containing eatables like milk, oil, ghee, curd, etc., so as to save all these things from becoming impure due to the effect of the eclipse. Scientific experiments have established the fact that this special type of grass is highly germicidal but still the effect of its use on the eve of an eclipse, as contained in the scriptures, calls for a thorough and careful investigation and research. A lot of care is taken of the pregnant ladies whose time of delivery is near. They are forbidden to do any physical activity or family chores during the period of the eclipse. They are advised by the senior ladies of the house to maintain calm during this period other wise the marks of their actions shall be borne by the baby in their womb. For instance, it is a superstitious belief that if a pregnant lady takes up besmearing or sweeping of the rooms during the eclipse, the child bears the mark in the form of a dark spot on its face. Or if a lady, in the advanced state of pregnancy, cleans vegetables, etc., at the time of the eclipse, the feet of her baby are turned inwards. These are all superstitious beliefs and these may not have any scientific basis.

However, this thing cannot be denied that some changes do take place in and around our environment. For instance the scientists strictly forbid looking at the sun with naked eyes when there is an eclipse and this fact corroborates with the facts stated in our scriptures. It is a fact that during the past, the eclipse was seen as a reflection in water but scientists says that the observation through any such reflection also is not very safe when compared to some of the modern gadgets invented for watching an eclipse.

(B). Important Items of Work to be undertaken on Auspicious Occasions.

As already discussed, all auspicious items of work are undertaken on an auspicious hour and day. But there are certain items of work, which require the service of an astrologer for determining the right and auspicious occasions '*Mahu:rta*' for doing such jobs. A list of these is given below: -

1. Performing the eleventh day celebrations/rituals of a newborn, known as '*Kaha Ne'thIr*'.
2. First hair cutting or tonshore of a baby known as '*ZarI Ka:say*', or '*Mundan*'.
3. Cleaning and decorating the house for marriage or *Yagnyopavita* ceremonies, known as '*GarI Na: vay*'.
4. To invoke the deities and gods prior to the marriage or *Yagnyopavita* ceremonies, known as *Divgo>n*.
5. *Yagnyopavita*, and marriage ceremonies.
6. Changing of *Yagnyiopavita* after the marriage or *Yagnyopavita Sanskars*.
7. The ceremony of the exchange of promises prior to the marriage, called ' *Kasam DrIy*'.
8. Holding the betrothal ceremony.
9. Unlocking the hair of a bride, called *Mas Mutsrun*.

10. Laying the foundation of the house.
11. Entering a new house.
12. First school admission of a child.
13. Putting up a new oven or the fireplace.
14. Offering of the sweet bread to the deity, '*Pan dyun*'.
15 Celebrating the onset of the first winter for a newborn child or a new bride, called '*Shishur*'.
16. Wearing of new clothes.
17. Construction of the roof or the putting the central beam of the roof.
18. Offering of oil to the manes.
19 Changing of rooms or houses, etc.,
20. Establishing a new business, joining any new service, or taking up any new venture.
21. Making new purchases and sales.
22. Going for medical checkup and taking of medicines.
23. Reaping of new crop and using the new food grains.
24. Going on a journey.

A journey can be of two types. The first is departure from the home and the other is the return journey. The auspicious days for undertaking a journey are determined on the basis of the direction in which a person has to go. The scriptures have specified different days for different directions as per details given below: -

a) Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday are considered good for travel towards the east.
b) Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday are good for travel towards the west.
c) Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday are good for southward journey.
d) Monday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday are good for journey towards the north.

The rising zodiac signs, the position of the planets in the zodiac, the lunar mansions and the position of the moon in a particular sign, are other considerations for determining an auspicious moment or time for a journey or determining the horal moment, '*Mahu:rta*'. However,

in case the journey at a particular hour and day is most essential and the day and other requirements for determining the journey as an auspicious one, do not exist, the scriptures have made a provision of making '*Prastha:n*' , i.e., taking out a bag of clothes, shoes or any other item of the accompanying luggage at the auspicious hour and date and keep the same at a place in the direction in which one has to proceed on the scheduled date. By doing so it is presumed that the journey is undertaken at the auspicious hour and day of the '*Prastha:n*'.

Chapter Sixteen

I. Tauhum, - Superstitions.

Myth is a human need to explain what could have been before his coming into existence and what could be there after his death. The fear of death and the measures to be undertaken to make life look more sweet and charming after death, are some of the reasons for which a man has to spin myths and have superstitions. These beliefs based on ignorance, are spun by human society of its own everywhere in the world. How could the Kashmiri Pandit society remain unaffected from these myths, beliefs and superstitions? An account of a few such superstitious/ beliefs is given below:

1 '*Po>nd*' (Chink) - Sneezing.
2. '*Zang*'- Somebody coming from the opposite right direction on ones departure from the house/residence.
3. '*Hu:ni wungun*',-Wailing of a dog.
4. '*Buth wuchun*' - Looking of someone's face in the morning.
5. '*Po>t a:lav*' - A call from behind.
6. '*So>pun*' - Dreams.

1. Po>nd (Chi:nk) - Sneezing.

Scientifically, sneezing occasionally is good for health because the sudden and uncomfortable out-burst of breath through the nose and mouth simultaneously, is believed to clear all the obstructions in the respiratory system of a man. But in our daily life, its occurrence at the time of initiation of certain fresh jobs is not considered good omen in our social set up. Thus sneezing is categorized into two different categories, the good one and the ominous one. Sneezing is considered as a bad omen on the following occasions: -

1. At the time of the departure for some work of importance, like going to office, departure for daily work, or taking up a new assignment. If the person has just left and some one sneezes, he will return to his house, have a short rest and restart after eating a sweet thing.
2. At the time of the departure of a bride or a bridegroom from the house/room/ for marriage or at the time of coming to the '*Vyu:g*' (the circular figure decorated with colours for the reception of the bride and the groom.) , sneezing is considered ominous.
3. At the time of taking the dead for cremation, burial, or an activity connected with making any offerings to the manes.
4. At the beginning of any new assignment or enterprise.
5. At the time of leaving for school, office or for the examination/interview, etc., and
6. At the time of leaving one's bed in the morning.

On a few occasions sneezing is considered as a good omen. These are all such types of jobs/actions, which a person would like to repeat every time and every day. Such as: -

1. At the time of preparing, distributing and taking food,
2. At the time of starting any work of religiosity as a *Hawan*, etc., and
3. At the time of going to the bed if any body sneezes, it is said that some guest might come or some one might have to leave for a nights stay, the next day.

Besides, if the sneezing at night or at bedtime, gives a scratching sensation, it is believed that some body has suffered at our hands, and he has cursed us. If the sneezing is comforting and has very low intensity, it is said that some body has remembered out of love. At the time of sneezing, the words, '*Sath Sada: Shiva*' are spoken every time – meaning 'Only *Shiva*, God Almighty, is the Ultimate Truth.'

2. *Zang* :

Coming of a person from the opposite right direction on one's departure from the house.

At the time of departure, all youngsters wish their elders and inform them of their departure and seek their blessings. They wish them in return and pray for the blessings of Mother goddess and ask them to leave after observing the '*RIts Zang*' at the time of their departure. In this way the word '*Zang*' is characterized into: -

a). *RIts Zang* - The auspicious one, and
b). *Khara:b Zang* - The inauspicious one.

a). RIts Zang - The auspicious one.

According to the scriptures the following persons/ things/ items coming from or falling to the right side of the path of an out going person, are considered as '*RItsh Zang*': -

Two *Brahmins*, [1] fruit, horse, cereals, milk and curd, cow, washed and clean clothes, musical instruments, burning/bright fire, meat, weapons, mirror, mother and child, an animal with a collar, flowers, a girl with a basket of soil or with a pitcher of water, ghee, sugar-cane, jewels, ornaments, turban, white oxen, white cloth, wine, a dead body taken for a burial or cremation not accompanied with wailing or weeping sounds, a flag, an

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[1] On the departure, if the first person coming from the opposite right direction, is a *Brahmin* or a cow, it is considered as most auspicious according to the scriptures The cause of their becoming inauspicious is due to the fact that the *Brahmin* and the cow are considered most pious and are revered by all. The *Dharama Shastra* doesn't allow any person to curse the two and thus open the doors of hell for himself. If a person leaves the house with the '*Zang*' of any of the two, and he does not achieve the desired results or the work does not materialise, he would automatically curse the person by whose '*Zang*' he started in the morning. To avoid this cursing, considered as most sinful in case of a *Brahmin* or a cow, people avoid their '*Zang*'.

arrow, a washer man, or a jackal, a lion, a horse an elephant.

b). Khara:b Zang **- The inauspicious one.**

According to the scriptures if the following persons/things/items coming from or falling to the right side of the path/direction at the time of departure from the residence,are considered to be as '*Khara:b Zang*' They are:-

Hair, bones, a snake, salt, a barren woman, smokeless fire, a eunuch, stools or urine, oil, a mad man, medicine, an enemy, a hermit, a sick man, grass, a naked man, a disabled person, a hungry man, blood, sneezing, fighting oxen, red cloth, sugar, butter-milk, an insect, black cereals, black beans, black gram, wool, or a cat. All these are categorized as '*Khara:b Zang*' or bad omens.

3. Hu:ni Wungun **- Wailing of a Dog.**

A dog is considered to be the most faithful animal and a companion of man. It is also believed that the vision of a dog is clear and it can see or feel the coming events in anticipation. It, thus, informs his most favourit companion 'man' with various actions of its body, by barking or by baying. In order to foretell the coming bad events, it expresses itself with a wailing sound, which is commonly known as *'Wungun'*. It is considered as most ominous. As soon as the dog starts crying in this manner, the mistress of the house speaks out the following riddle, which it is believed stops the dog from such wailing: -

DIrI dIrI honyo, yati kyo yati kya:h ,
Yati chi: DevIta:h , HalmatI yAgnya:h,
Achin su:r dandan syakh, payyiyo honaya:h,
Du:r tsal Kutta:h.

Translation: -

Go away; go away dog, what is here? Who is here?
Here are the gods; here we perform a *Yajnya* of god Ganesha,
Oh dog! Let ashes be in your eyes and sand be under your teeth,
Oh dog go away - go away.

It is a general belief that if a dog cries untimely and that too during the night hours, it is feared that some body from the family or from the neighbourhood may pass away soon. The un-timely crying of the dog is considered ominous for the country as a whole and is thought to be a warning of the coming disasters.

4. Buth Wuchun - The First Look of a Person in the Morning

On rising from the bed in the morning, a man looks at the palms of his own hands instantly, believing it to be auspicious. He kisses them with reverence, because hands are for his own protection and earning his livelihood. After his first salutations to the hands, he holds both his hands together and pays his reverence to the Almighty and to his gods and goddesses. It is after doing all this that he steps out of his room to meet other members of his family and outsiders. It is a superstitious belief that the first look of the face of a person, is thought to be of two kinds, One is considered as an auspicious one and the other is believed as an ominous one, as per the details given below: -

A) Rut Buth - An auspicious Face.

Early in the morning or on leaving our bedroom, we do see someone first. If the day passes in joy and happiness without any mishaps, the face of such a

person, that we had seen in the morning, is considered as an auspicious,. 'Face' otherwise not. We wish for such an occurrence every morning.

B) Khara:b Buth - An inauspicious Face.

If on some day we feel that our time has passed very miserably throughout the day, we consider to have seen the face of a wicked person in the morning. In this way a notion develops in the family and the society that such and such person has got, '*Rut Buth*', 'auspicious face' and such and such person has got '*Khara:b buth*' 'ominous face', We also try to look at the face of the auspicious person in the morning whereas we keep away from a man who is supposed to have an ominous face.

5. *Po>t a:lav* - A Call From Behind

When a person leaves his residence for his/her office, school, and journey or for whatever kind of work he is doing, giving him a call from the behind is considered ominous. It is a superstitious belief that the call given from the behind is the main cause for failure in the implementation of ones plans and attainment of the desired goal. Hence such an action is avoided by all intentionally.

6. *So>pun* - Dreams.

Grahisutras clearly forbid keeping ones head towards the north or the west while sleeping at night. The *Shatpath Brahman* says that while sleeping at night, keeping our feet towards the east is to dishonour the gods. The night is meant for sleeping and during the night all the lunar mansions travel from the west towards the east. Therefore, the east is considered as the place of

gods. It is admitted scientifically that the air currents travel from the north to the south during the night and while sleeping, keeping our head towards the north may cause harm to the minute cells of the human brain and thus become the cause of the disturbed state of sleep. Such an act may also deprive us from the fresh air coming from the north. It is, perhaps, because of this very fact that we keep the head of our dead towards the west when we lay him/her on the besmeared ground after death

A sound mind only can experience good dreams. The deeper the sleep, the more purposeful shall be the dream. A dream dreamt in deep slumber definitely bears its fruit sooner or later. An indisposed man or a person, who overeats himself, can experience very bad dreams. Such dreams are meaningless and don't bear any fruit whatsoever. There can even be nightmares, which depict an indisposed state of mind of an ailing man, and his dreams, if any, don't have any meaning.

According to the *Dharma Shastra*, if a healthy man dreams a dream in his sound sleep in the first quarter of the night, it bears fruit within a period of one year. If it is dreamt in the second quarter of the night, it bears fruit within eight months. A dream dreamt in the third quarter of the night is said to bear fruit within three months time and the dream during the last quarter of the night comes true within one month. According to the scriptures, if a person has a bad dream in any part of the night then he should try to sleep again and if he has a good or auspicious dream later, he/she should meditate for the rest of the night and remember the Almighty. Dreams tell about the future and that is why there used to be some experts who could interpret dreams. In our society there were till recently a number of persons known as the professional dream or '*So>pnI Phal*', interpreters.

Chapter Seventeen

Daily Rituals - *Do>hI Dishiki RasIm* -

(A). Rituals for Men.

A man has to follow numberless rituals and customs in his daily life. For some these are like a challenge and they face them happily while for others these are like a burden and they bear them with pain. While living in a society one has to observe them. It is up to ones own self either to enjoy and observe them happily or do so weeping and wailing. These daily rituals begin with the start of our day. Our religious scriptures and society direct us to observe these rituals and rites. All these can be discussed under the following headings: -

1. *Nue 'ndri Wo>thun* - Waking up.
2. *Zal Mal Tra:wun.* - Relieving our selves.
3. *AthI Buth Challun* - Washing and cleaning.
4. *Yoni Chalun* - Washing of the Y*agnyopavita.*
5. *Shra:n Karun* - Bathing.
6. *Sasndhya KarIni* - Offering of water to the deities.
7. *Tarpan Dyun* - Offering of water to the manes.
8. *BatI Khyo>n* - Eating food.

1. Nye'ndri Wo>thun - Waking Up.

According to our scriptures a man should rise up from the bed in the last quarter of the night also called the '*Brahmi Mahurat*', 'the auspicious time of gods.' Because after relieving, cleaning and bathing one gets ample time to spend in remembering the Almighty. We have been advised to have a look of our hands first and after kissing both the hands, we are at liberty to leave our bedroom for attending other jobs.

2. *Zal Mal Tra:wun*
Relieving one self

The scriptures contain that our first and foremost duty is to attend to the call of nature after we get up in the morning. Our scriptures restrain us against defecating or urinating in the open and on the naked soil. In case there is no alternative we have been directed to do so on the grassy land. Preference has been given to pit like places for such purposes, if latrines/bath rooms and urinals are not available. We have further been asked to keep quite during relieving ourselves and keep the *yagnyopavita* on the right ear. A *Brahman* has been asked to wash thoroughly the excreting parts of the body with his left hand and clean the left hand with brown soil ten times and both the hands seven times. It should not be wet soil or the soil used by any other person. The scriptures have also forbidden the use of a soil dug out by rats or ants for such cleaning. We have also been forbidden to use the soil extracted from a wall of a house or a boundary wall. We can, however, use the fresh ashes for such a purpose. That is, perhaps, the reason that the people of Kshmir till recently used to dry wash the utensils with fresh ashes. The scriptures contain a vivid description regarding place, side directions for relieving and the cleaning codes, etc.[1]

Needless to say that soap has taken the place of all other cleaning materials in modern homes. Besides, the construction of modern toilets and bathrooms has added to the comforts of our daily life and we have done away with old procedures. It can not, however, be denied that our elders still insist to stick to the old praxis.

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[1] Pt. Keshav Bhatt, , *Mekhala Pustak, 'Upayanam'*, 1925, P. 71-72.

3. AthI Buth Chalun – Washing and Cleaning.

After urination and defecation a person has been advised not to touch his head or its parts until he/she has cleaned his/her hands and the concerned parts of the body [1]. Stress has been laid on washing the concerned parts of the body once after urination and three times after defecation. The left hand is to be washed ten times and both the hands are to be washed seven times after defecation with brown soil for *Brahmins*, red soil for *Kshatriyas*, blue soil for *Vaishas* and black soil for the women and all other castes. This sort of cleaning has been advised for a family man. The *Brahamcharis* and *Sannyasis* have to complete these formalities three times and an ascetic four times [2]. After doing all this, we are advised to first wash the face and then take a bath.

4. Yoni Chalun - Washing of the Yagnyopavita.

We have been advised to wash the holy Thread daily with fresh and clean water. Placing the *Yagnyopavita* in the thumbs of the two hands we have been advised to wash it three times reciting the Vedic hymn '*Gayatray Mantra*'. We have been directed to wear it again while reciting the same, the Vedic hymn, '*Mantra*', for casting the '*Yagnyopavita*'.

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[1] Bhat, Pandit Keshov, *Mekhala Pustak, 'Upayanam'* 1925, P. 72.
[2] Ibid., P 72.

5. *Shra:n Karun* - Bathing.

After wearing the Holy Thread, we are advised to take a bath. First we are advised to wash our left foot and then the right one. A woman has been advised to wash her right foot first and then the left one At least three dips have been advised if the bath is taken in a stream or in a pond, etc. Great importance has been given to bathing in our scriptures. It is said that the life of a person begins with bathing and it ends with the 'final' bath.

6. *Sandhya KarIni'* – Offering of water to the deities.

The word 'Sandhya' means 'day and night', but for a Kashmiri Pandit, besides the bathing code, it specifically means twilight. It can be morning time when the daybreak starts and the darkness ends commonly known as the '*Brahmi Mhah:rt*' or in the evening time when the day comes to an end and the night begins. It is named as the '*Sandhy:a Ka:l*'. We have been advised to hold this ritual in our daily life, two times in a day. Besides being a water-spot ritual, it involves physical and mental exercises and the '*Pranayama*' as well, This can be performed on the bank of a river/ pond/stream or at an ordinary water tap. It may be pointed that stress has been laid on using fresh running water for the purpose. At the same time, it has been clarified that after lifting and throwing back the stored water in a vessel three times, makes the water in the vessel free from all impurities and also as good as the fresh water. This type of concession is provided where running water is not available. Before offering water to the deities and gods, a number of exercises concerning our respiration, called '*Pranayam*', have been advised so as to purify the inner self of a

person, which is necessary for the union of the Self with the Universal Soul through meditation. Scientifically too all these actions are considered to act as stimulants to good health. At the time of offering water to the deities and gods, we have been advised to keep the Holly Thread under our right arm. First of all offerings are made to the sun three times while chanting the hymns from the scriptures prescribed for the purpose.

7. *Tarpan Dyun* – Offering of water to the manes.

While keeping the Holy Thread under the left arm, water is offered to the dead who are in their heavenly abode now. It is known as '*Div Pe'tIr,* offering water to the manes, Rishis and gods, etc.' After reciting the date and the day according to the lunar calendar and the '*Gotra*' of the diseased, for three generations on the father's and three generations on the mother's/grand mother's (paternal) side, three grand –father's from the mother's side and three grand mother's from the mother's (maternal) side, thus making a total of twelve such ancestors, besides, the other manes who were in our relation and are now in the heaven. In addition to this water is also offered to the *Rishis* by keeping the Holy Thread around the two thumbs of our hands. The scriptures say that gods are offered water and other offerings over the fingertips of the right hand with the Holy Thread being kept under the right arm. The offerings are to be made to the *Rishis* over the right palm of the hand while keeping the '*Yagnyopavita*' between the two thumbs and the first finger of the hands and offerings for the manes are offered through the gap in between the thumb and the first finger while keeping the Holy Thread under the left arm. [1]

[1] Jyotshi , Kesho Pandit, *Karma Kaandi, Part II*, 1933 , Ps. 7, 8, and 16.

8. *BatI Khyo>n* - Eating Foods.

The scriptures have defined five kinds of fires, known as '*Panchagni*'. These are: -

1. *Preteksha Diva* - The eternal fire or the sun,
2. *Agni Deva*- The ritual/non ritual *Agni*, or the fire god.
3. *Da:va:gni* -The fire caused in the air (in the charge of god *Indra*), like the thunder-bolt, etc.,
4. *VaDva:gni* -The fire existing in water/seas (in the charge of *Varun*).
5. *JaThra:gni* - The fire of the stomach, which helps digestion.

In order to subside the fire arising from hunger, we require food. Our scriptures have clearly mentioned that taking of food is as good as making offerings to the Sacred Fire. Therefore, the food we eat must be pure, clean and natural, because taking food is like performing a '*Hawan*'- offerings made to the Sacred Fire – *JaThra:gni* - the fire of the stomach. As soon as the plate containing the food comes, the scriptures have advised that we should first offer our salutations to it. When it is laid before us, we should take five or at least three handful from it known as '*Panch Kawal*' or five morsels of cooked food commonly known as '*Hu:ni Mechi*' [1] and place them outside the plate. After keeping the five morsels outside the plate, we have been advised to take a little water in the hollow of the palm and rinse our mouth with it. In the scriptures it is known as ' a:*tsIman*' [2] in the

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[1] The actual word seems '*Hawan MyAt / Mechi*', the five morsels of cooked food kept apart for a dog, a sinner, a leper, a sick man and for the crow, according to the scriptures. '*Hawan*' means offerings made to the sacrificial fire.

[2] Taking a little water to rinse the mouth and throat,. scientifically a sound

common man's language. The scriptures have also advised us to take food quietly and without making any sounds or indulging in un-necessary conversations.

On the whole our scriptures lay five types of responsibilities or duties on a person while supporting his family under the *Grahast Ashram*. These are called the '*Pancha Maha Yajnyas*', the five essential duties that a householder has to perform daily. These are also called the five great sacrifices or the five daily ceremonies for the devotees. These are: -

1 '*Braham Yajnya'*, which includes the studying of the religious scriptures and the *Vedas*. This has been marked as the first duty of a Hindu and is known as '*Adhyapana'*.
2. Offering sacrifices to gods through the Holy Fire, known as the '*Deva Yajnya'*.
3. Hospitable treatment of guests, known as the '*Atithi Yajnya'* it is also called '*Nara Yajnya'* for we offer food and drink to the needy when they are thirsty and hungry. This, however, should include ones own self and the family, which he feeds daily.
4. Serving of water to the manes is called the *'Pitri Yajnya'*. Without offering water to the manes, a householder is not advised to break even his fast.
5. Serving a small portion of the grains to insects and birds is known as '*Bhuta Yajnya'*.

Besides we have been directed to take sufficient amount of rest and sleep at night so as to keep our body, soul and mind in proper order and healthy for the night has been earmarked for taking complete rest and this is true for all living beings.

(B). Rituals For a Woman.

The day-to-day chores of a common Kashmiri Hindu lady can be classified as under: -

1. '*Bra:nd Fash Dyun-*'- Besmearing the front portion of the main door,

2. '*AthI Buth Chalun*' - Washing and bathing,

3. '*Sani Va:ri Barni*' -Washing and filling of the prosperity pots,

4. '*BatI Ranun*' - Cooking of food,

5. *Sandhya: Tso<ng Za:lun*'- Kindling of the evening lamp.

1. Bra:nd Fash Dyun -
Besmearing the Front of the Main Door.

Every Hindu lady, whether she is a daughter, a daughter-in-law or the mistress of the house, has been advised to wake up early in the morning, clean the front or the main door of the house and the courtyard. She has also been asked to besmear this portion of the house with clay and water. This directive has been elucidated very clearly in the following lines of a folk song: -

BaTI kori hund suli vo>thun,
Suli vathith bra:nd fash dyun,
Thath chi watha:n ne'ndri mandinyan
BaTI ku:ri: sharImda:r ban.

Translation: -

A Hindu lady should rise up early in the morning,
After waking up early she should besmear the front courtyard,
Instead they get up from the bed at midday,

Oh! Hindu lady, you be ashamed of yourself (for this act.)

The daily chores of a Hindu lady should start with the besmearing of the courtyard and the front portion of the main entrance of the house. At present all this may appear to us just an ordinary act of cleaning the house but if we ponder a little deeper and consider its socio-economic aspects, we can easily visualize the life style of our forefathers who had just small huts of one or two rooms to live in. There were no lofty buildings like those we have now nor was cement concrete used then in the construction of such small houses. All the houses were made of mud and thatch. Hence the members of the family used the courtyard and the space to the right and to the left of the main door as a sitting place. This was also the meeting place for the guests, friends and neighbours. The besmeared place was a mark that all the family members living in the house were hale and hearty. During the period under review, besmearing of the place was an essential requirement for welcoming visitors but with the passage of time it took the shape of a ritual with the result that in spite of the fact that we have very lofty buildings having large accommodations when compared to the early days under review, a Kashmiri housewife washes the cemented courtyard and the front portion of her house early in the morning on all days and in all seasons even today. In those days of scarcity, the besmearing, besides being a means to indicate the well being of the members of that family, clearly indicated that the people of Kashmir loved entertaining guests and had a great sense of hospitality. It may be pointed out that on the birthday of a family member, the besmearing of the said place is not done whereas it is done on the anniversaries and all other auspicious days of the year very earnestly.

2. *AthI Buth Chalun*
Washing and Bathing.

After cleaning the outer portions of the house, a housewife is directed to wash and clean herself by washing her face, hands and feet and then take a bath. There is no difference in the washing and bathing ritual between males and females except that the female are directed to start washing their limbs beginning from her right ones. Besides, during the days gone, they were at liberty to use any kind of soil for cleaning their body while bathing. Modern ways of bathing have further minimized this difference as every body now uses toilet soaps and hence the use of any soil for the purpose does not arise. After taking a bath she would keep herself ready for the preparation of breakfast and meals, etc., for the whole family.

3. *Sani Va:ri Barni* -
Washing and cleaning of Prosperity Pots.

It is a common practice to have two small toy pots earthen, copper or bronze in almost all Kashmiri Pandit kitchens. The housewife, while getting up early in the morning, would clean the toy pots and wash them with fresh water after taking a bath herself. She would fill them with fresh water. Reaching the door, she would sprinkle a little water on the upper portion of the door from these pots and then enter the house. It may be recalled that when the '*Shra:dh*' ceremony of the manes is celebrated we sprinkle water from these toy pots on the door in the middle of the *Shra:dh'* ceremony. Both

these pots are kept close to each other on a shelf in a very clean corner of the kitchen. A little of food and vegetables, cooked for the family, are first served to these toy pots every day and then only it is served to other family member of the house.

It was considered a superstition and meaningless practice and ritual till recently. But the excavations at the *Harwan, Mohenjo-daro* and *Harapa* have thrown some light on the use of these pots because these were found at all the three places and in abundance. In view of the fact that the excavations in question involved more than one civilization, scholars and historians were compelled to think and ponder more deeply on the origin, purpose and use of these tiny pots by the people of those civilizations.

It is generally believed that these two pots represent the two unmarried girls who, besides being revered as the '*Ganga/Jamuna*' and the '*Saraswati* ', are considered to be in charge of the wealth and prosperity in a family .The sprinkling of water at the main door hints to this belief. It is also said that the word '*Sani Va:ri*' is a corrupt from of the Sanskrit word '*Smridi Var:i*' meaning pots bringing prosperity.

4. *BatI Ranun* - Cooking of Food.

In earlier times a lady had to bring water from a well, a spring or a river. Then she would bring firewood etc., for kindling the fire at the selected place in the kitchen. There were joint families in those days and the pots for preparing vegetables and rice too used to be large when compared to the modern nuclear families. At the time of putting rice into the pot, the lady cooking meals, would take a hand full of rice three times and throw it into the burning fire as an oblation made to the fire god. It was considered a necessary practice so as to

please the fire god. There is a saying in Kashmiri, 'if we deceive or curtail our own share on the dining table, we get reborn as a bitch but if we curtail the due share of the fire (god), we are not reborn ever.[1]' This clearly indicates that a housewife who cooks meals for the whole family and does not care to keep, among others, her own share of the meals, she is reborn as a bitch and if she does not offer a small portion of rice to the fire-god as an ablation, she deprives herself even from this mean rebirth. Meaning that she is sure to get lost in the deep hell. With the change of the times the cooking patterns have changed. We neither need any firewood nor are there those big pots for cooking meals in the present two-member families. Every thing is done mechanically and in pressure cookers. Hence all this appears as if the things of the past.

After the food is prepared and the meals are ready to be served to the members of the family, a very small portion of it is partly offered to the small toy pots, a little of it is put on the boundary wall of the house or on an outer shelf of the house/room for the birds and insects and a little is offered to the house deity and the manes as an oblation. The remaining food is served to the members of the family. Our scriptures have laid great stress on preparing simple, nutritious, and pure food, which promotes longevity, vitality, energy, health and happiness. The scriptures have forbid us from taking foods, which promote passion, lethargy and evil tendencies [2]. We believe in 'We are what we eat' theory.

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[1] The riddle in common Kashmiri language reads: '*Pa:n vu:ntsith honi zanIm, tI Da:n vu:ntsith nI titi'*.

[2] *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita*, iii,. 13, ix, 26, and xvii, .6.

5. Sandya Tso<ng Za:lun - **Kindling of the Evening Lamp.**

An earthen lamp is lit on a window of the house facing to the East just before the nightfall. It is lit before it is twilight and is kept burning for a short while. Presently it seems to be a meaningless practice, but it must have been a matter of great importance in those days when the streets would get dark with the arrival of the evening. A small lamp at the window corner would prove to be a boon for the latecomers to their respective homes. No doubt the use of electricity has changed the life pattern of a common man and all these things appear to be things of the pas, but still most of the Kashmiri Pandit ladies stick to this old practice even today.

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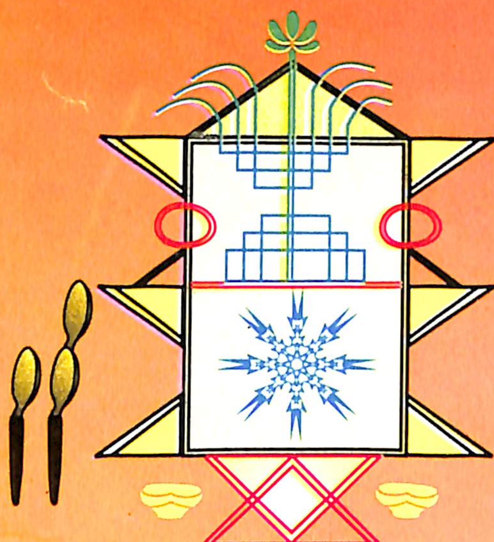
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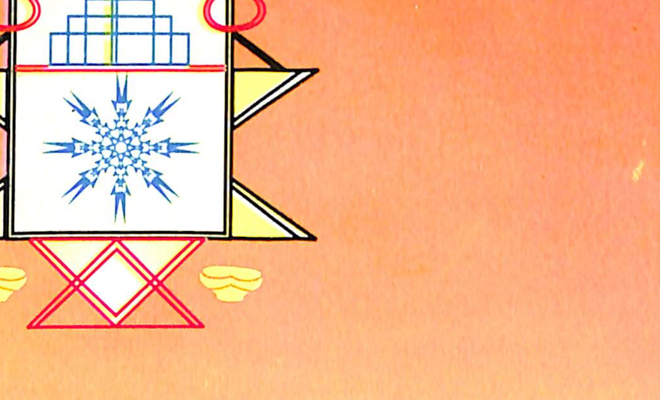
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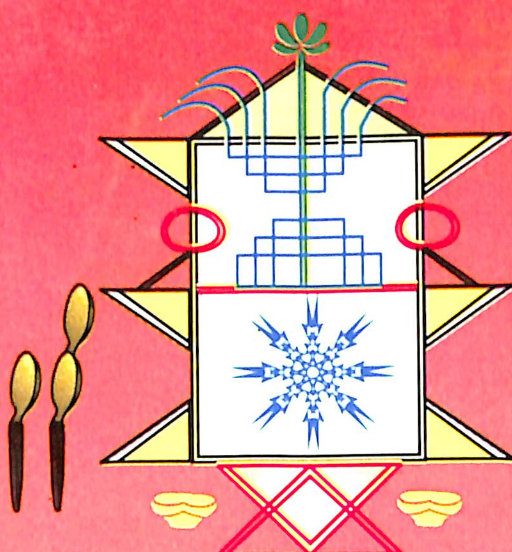
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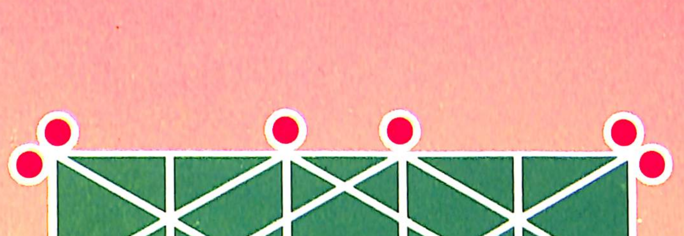












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